Gone without YOU
BFDI fanfic
LeafCake

Prologue

It was a cool spring morning, the sun was shining but there was a light rain falling from the clouds that were illuminated by the glow of the sun.

Everything was bathed in a golden light, the greenery shimmered and swayed in the wind.

But the green haired woman standing at the foot of a freshly dug grave did not care for this beauty.

The coffin had been lowered down ten minutes prior, she had thrown a rose on top of it and said her final words.

The service ended and people left but she stayed back to have her last moments with the remains of her husband.

The idea of him being down there... It just didn't feel right, he was always so bright and vibrant, this simply couldn't be him.

He had been dead for over a week and she still can't accept it and she didn't know when she would, if she ever would.

"Leafy,"

Her thoughts were interrupted by her red headed friend.

"Leafy, it's time to go,"

"Yeah, you're right but you and Coiny can start walking to the car, I just want one last chance to look at him,"

The red woman nodded at her sadly and turned away.

She was alone now, except for the him.

"I think you spoiled me," she said to him.

"Because I don't think I could ever love anyone else, not after the way I loved you,"

She wiped her eyes and let a small smile make its way on her face.

"Thank you for time we had together,"

...

And with that, she burst into tears yet again.

Chapter 1.

(3rd person POV)

Leafy was driving home from work, it had been a stressful week with client cancellations and arguments amongst workers, she was glad that the weekend was finally here and she could finally take a breather.

From the start of the week she could tell it would pure torture so had made plans to have a relaxing weekend all to herself.

She had bought herself the nice wine, her favourite snacks and to top it off she treated herself to a face mask.

And what's more was that after she told Pin her plans, she offered to mind Grove for her which meant there would be silence and a lie in.

Of course, she loved Grove with all her heart but he was still a four year old child and he had lots of energy and that didn't really do much for relaxing.

Once she got home, she kicked off her heels and went upstairs to draw herself a bath to which she decided to add in her rose scented bath salts.

The water was lovely and warm and the bubbles made her feel like she was in paradise.

As she relaxed into the bath all of the aches in her muscles and joints gradually slipped away as she felt a sense of relaxation she hadn't felt in a while.

She lay there for around an hour and she could have stayed forever but she didn't want to waste her evening so she forced herself to get out of the bath and into her comfy pajamas.

Her pajamas were freshly washed and once she was all warm and dry and she had finished her skincare she felt amazing.

She went into the kitchen, got her wine and snacks then curled up on the sofa watching sappy rom-coms.

It was all so lovely but after a while she began to feel a bit lonely.

If Grove were here he would have begged her to put on The Super Rangers or any of the Insufferable Me movies but she wouldn't have minded, she would just be glad to see him smile.

By the time he would finish the first movie he would be snuggled up against her and would beg for to watch another and of course she would cave but he would fall asleep thirty minutes in and she would carry him up to bed and sing him a lullaby before heading to her own room.

She was on her third movie and she wished more than anything she had someone to cuddle up to.

Usually it was Grove who snuggled into her but she had no one she could do the same to.

She tuned the movie out as she remembered what her evenings used to be like when the man she loved was still alive.

She would always trap him in a cuddle as they watched their favourite movies and drank together and everytime he got up he would kiss her before asking if she needed anything.

It was always around midway through the film they would just start chatting to each other about anything that came to their minds and this would go on until they both fell asleep on the couch in each other's arms.

She stood up and walked to the photo of him she had on her wall, carefully brushing her thumb over his smiling face.

"Why did you have to go Firey?" she sighed.

She stood there for a few minutes, the only noise she could hear was

the low talking from the TV and she hated the emptiness of the apartment.

It was dark and cold, the distant sounds of the city were the only things she could hear.

Her wine was almost gone and she decided she wasn't bothered with finishing the movie and she just wanted to go bed.

She turned off all the lights and brought her leftovers into the kitchen.

She trapsed upstairs and fell onto her bed.

She was under her blanket and she was comfortable but no matter how hard she tried she just couldn't fall asleep.

Nothing seemed to work, she tried calming music, a sleeping mask, counting backwards from 100, nothing was helping her.

By this point it was almost 3AM and she was so tired.

She was about to give up and go downstairs to watch the second half of that stupid movie when an idea struck her, the realisation of what her problem was.

She got out of her bed and walked across the hall to Grove's bedroom.

She got into his bed and made herself comfortable as she held one of his favourite stuffed animals in her arms.

Now she knew why she couldn't fall asleep and why this night hadn't been as relaxing as she had hoped.

The next time she would do something like this she would have Grove with her and she would make sure both of them had a nice time.

Because she knew that she still couldn't handle anymore of those silent and lonely nights.

They remind her too much of him.

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Chapter 2

Leafy's alarm woke her up and she groaned in frustration, she had no energy for a new day even though she didn't have to go to work.

She needed to pick Grove up from Coiny and Pin and then figure out what to make for dinner.

She begrudgingly got up, pushing the stuffed animals off her and went to go freshen up in the bathroom.

Once she was done she went downstairs to make herself a coffee and watch the news. She always liked being up to date on current affairs, it helped her feel attached to things.

She checked her phone for any messages and saw she had gotten one from Pin.

Hey Leafy, I have an offer for you.

Leafy rolled her eyes, when Pin had an offer it was never good.

What is it Pin?

Well, why don't we have a Girls Night tonight? Grove can stay at my house again and we can just go out and have fun!

Pin you know how I feel about Girls Night.

Aw come on Leafy we haven't done this in forever, it'll be good for you.

Everytime we do this you try to set me up with some weird co-worker you know.

But it won't be like that this time, I promise! It'll just be you, me and Golfball.

I highly doubt that.

Please Leafy, I'm worried about you. You need to start getting back out there.

If it shuts you up I'll go but if there is even one guy tries to get with me, I'm out.

Great! You won't regret this!

Let's see.

Leafy sighed as she put her phone down, Pin was always way too quick to answer texts.

Now she had to find suitable clothes and take a shower.

She liked to take her time in the shower, letting the water properly wet her skin and lathering in the shampoo and conditioner.

In recent years she had learned to take time for herself so she could feel good.

But there wasn't time for that, she needed to drive to Pin's house to check in on Grove and meet with Pin and Golfball.

When she was out of the shower, she looked for some clothes, Pin had told her to wear something "fun" but Leafy didn't understand what she meant so she put on some tight, black jeans and a shoulderless white blouse along with black high-heels.

She decided to go the extra mile and curl her hair slightly and put on a bit of makeup, all in all she liked how she looked.

She grabbed her car keys, turned off the lights and left the apartment, making extra certain she double locked the front door.

She went downstairs to the underground car park and hopped into her car.

She pulled out of her spot and exited the car park, driving out onto the busy city streets.

The traffic wasn't heavy today so she made it to Pins in thirty minutes instead of the usual hour.

Pin had given her the access code to her private parking space so she had no issues with finding a place to park.

Leafy made her way up to Pin and Coiny's apartment and rang the doorbell.

She heard quickly running little footsteps and a small voice saying "It's mama, it's mama!"

She smiled as the door was opened and the little boy jumped out for a hug.

"Oh I missed you Grovey," Leafy said as she held him tight.

Coiny appeared in the doorway and greeted Leafy.

"Pin's just finishing her makeup, she'll be with you in a few minutes," he said.

Leafy shook her head in mock disappointment.

"Thank you so much for looking after Grove for me, he really likes spending time with you," she smiled.

"It's no biggie, I love lookin' after the little guy. We're partners in crime, right Grove?" Coiny held out his hand for a fist bump which Grove eagerly returned.

"But seriously thank you, I don't know what I'd do without you and Pin," she sighed.

"You wouldn't be able to come out with me!" a voice called from inside.

Pin walked out the door, dressed in a short pencil skirt, a crop top and a baggy denim jacket.

"Hello Pin, you're looking... Fun," Leafy put emphasis on the last word.

"At least I look like I'm going out! You look like a glamorous office worker," she responded.

"We aren't going clubbing, we're just getting a few drinks," Leafy said, exasperated.

"Yeah, yeah I know," Pin laughed.

"You both look great, just go off and have a nice time," Coiny shooed them away.

"Bye Coiny, thanks again," Leafy called as she left.

Pin kissed Coiny on the cheek and followed after Leafy.

The plan was to take a taxi to the bar where they would meet Golfball and they'd call another one when they wanted to leave.

The taxi ride went smoothly, with Pin babbling on about how good the cocktails in this place were.

Although Leafy would never say it, she enjoyed her best friend's ramblings and was greatful she cared about her enough to invite her out like this.

Once they arrived, Pin paid the fare, they went into the bar and eventually found Golfball.

They all sat and chatted together, Golfball getting mad at Pin when she found out how persistent she had been to get Leafy to come out.

"I told you if she didn't want to you weren't allowed to force her," she snapped.

"But I could tell she wanted too! She just acts like she doesn't wanna go out," Pin insisted.

Leafy rolled her eyes but laughed softly. She had to admit it felt good to be sitting with them again.

They all ordered drinks and Leafy allowed herself to relax since she really had nothing to feel upset or anxious about.

As the evening progressed more people came into the bar and music started playing.

" Oh god, Pin is this a young people's bar?" Golfball asked.

"Hey, we are young, we're all only 25!" Pin said taking a sip from her drink.

"Yeah, and I'm a mom, some of these guys are probably still living with theirs," Leafy said looking around the room.

The trio ordered more drinks and Pin was starting to laugh at everything.

"H-hey Leafy, I-I love you, alright ? And like you're a massive inspiration to me, like seriously you rule," Pin's words were slurred as she pointed at Leafy.

"And Golfball, you're just so smart, Tennisball is lucky to have you. You're literally the best,"

"Oh god, she's in that stage of being drunk,", Golfball face-palmed.

"Yeah, maybe we should start leaving, I don't like the way people are starting to dance," Leafy murmured.

The people around them were getting too flirty with eachother and there was a bit too much making out going on for Leafy's comfort so she was glad to be leaving.

Golfball called the taxi and Leafy excused herself to go to the bathroom.

Leafy waded through the sea of people and finally reached the bathroom and there was a surprisingly small queue.

After she was done using the facility she stood outside the restroom and checked her phone when she heard someone speaking to her.

"Hey, what's a woman like you doin' here,"

She looked up to see a pair of boys who looked like they were in

college, clearly starting to get drunk.

"I'm afraid that's none of your business," she shrugged.

"Aw come on, we're just being friendly," one of them said.

"Yeah, we're just curious. You don't look like you come to this kinda place often," the other nodded.

"You'd be right about that," she replied, not looking from her phone.

"So are you like, a mom or something?" the tallest one asked.

"Excuse me?" Leafy looked up sharply.

"It's just, you know," the shorter one said as they both snickered.

"No, I don't know," Leafy snapped.

"You know, you got them mom hips," they burst out laughing.

"Ugh, shut up ," she shouted, blushing crimson as she stormed off

She went back to Golfball and was told the cab would be there shortly so they made their way outside.

"That was nice," Leafy said as she breathed the night air.

"It was nice to spend time with you Leafy, Pin has been ranting about this for a while now," Golfball responded.

"Maybe we should do it more often, I know we meet for coffee and stuff but maybe Pin is right," Leafy said thoughtfully.

"Don't let her hear you say that, she won't let you have a peaceful night in again," Golfball joked.

Pin was asleep against Leafy so there was no fear of her hearing.

The taxi arrived and they all got in, Golfball lived the closest to the bar so she was dropped off first, she paid her part of the ride and said her goodbyes to Leafy when she got out.

Leafy instructed the driver where to go to drop Pin off and as they drove Leafy asked Coiny to come down to the main entrance of their apartment complex to make sure Pin didn't die walking up the stairs.

They pulled up infront of the complex and Coiny was there in his pajamas and he helped Pin out of the car and he paid for Pin's part of the journey.

Leafy then told the driver how to get to her house and sat in the back of the taxi with nothing to do.

The driver offered to put some music on and so Leafy took the offer and so she sat there listening to the current most popular songs.

At long last she got to her destination and paid the taxi driver and thanked him.

She got out of the taxi, making sure she didn't leave anything behind and then she looked up at her apartment window.

She was surprised to see the living room lights on.

The driver asked her if she was alright but she assured him she was.

He believed her and then drove off.

Leafy stood there for a moment trying to remember if she had turned all the lights off when she left.

She was certain she had but maybe her mind was playing tricks on her, she was tired and had alcohol in her system.

She took out her phone but didn't call the police yet incase it was just a light she left in but she had the number on speed dial.

She got in the elevator, her heart beating quickly as her mind race's through every possible scenario as she prayed it was just a light.

She got out at her floor and slowly walked toward the door.

It was unlocked.

She had double locked that door, she never leaves it unlocked.

There was someone in her house.

She quietly opened the door and picked up Grove's baseball bat, and raised it up ready to attack.

She walked into the living room but there was no one in there.

"Come out here, whoever you are and get the hell out of my house," she yelled.

There was silence for a few moments until she heard footsteps coming down the stairs leading to the bedrooms.

She braced herself as they came closer.

She held her breath as they made their way down but nothing could have prepared her for what she saw.

"What," she gasped.

Her voice caught in her throat as she locked eyes with the intruder.

"Who the hell are you," she choked.

The man standing infront of her looked confused and a bit hurt.

"Leafy" they began "It's me,"

"It's Firey,"

But this shouldn't be possible.

Firey died four years ago.

Chapter 3

Leafy stared at the man infront of her, the man who she had loved but who died four years prior.

"What's happening?" she questioned as her eyes welled up.

"You're dead, you aren't supposed to be here, I watched them bury you," she said as her voice shook.

"It's a really long story" the flame haired man said.

Leafy stared in shock, her thoughts racing to figure out how he could possibly be here.

This had to be some horrible person's sick idea of a joke.

"WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE? HOW DARE YOU IMPERSONATE HIM?" she yelled as she lifted the bat up to attack him.

"JESUS CHRIST, LEAFY CALM DOWN," he screamed as he blocked the bat from concussing him.

"Why are you doing this to me? Why are you pretending to be him?" she said as she finally gave up and dropped the bat on the ground, all of the emotions finally taking over.

She sank to the floor, unable to look at the person in front of her as her quiet sobs filled the silence.

They both stayed silent for a while, neither wanting to initiate anything.

Until Firey decided to speak.

"Leafy, I know you can't believe it, but it is actually me," he said calmly.

Leafy still refused to look up.

"Please look at me Leafy, please believe that I'm alive, that this isn't a joke," he begged.

Leafy finally looked up and for the first time in years she gazed into the eyes of the only person she had ever loved.

"But how? You're dead," she insisted.

"There's a lot that needs to be said but... I can't yet. I need to make sure of a few things first," he sighed.

"This has to be a dream," Leafy muttered. "If you weren't dead where have you been the past four years?"

"I still can't tell you all the details but as soon as I can I will," Firey reassured.

"Why are you back? How can you leave for so long and just come back like this?"

"Are you not happy that I'm back?" he asked somewhat hurt.

"I'm happy that you're back but I just don't understand how you think you can just waltz back into my life after being gone for so long," she shook her head.

"I didn't really know where to go and you're the only person I wanted to see," he smiled at her.

"You put me through absolute hell,it's not fair, this isn't fair Firey. I need it to stop," Leafy pleaded as she wiped her eyes.

"Leafy, I didn't want to do what I did but there are people out there who forced me to do it, I'm sorry I really am," he looked at her concernedly.

"Sorry doesn't make everything better, Firey. When you died I was so alone and in so much pain," she glared back at him, her vision blurry with tears.

"Leafy, I-I'm sorry..." he trailed off.

"Look, I'm too tired to deal with this right now. In the morning, we are going to talk about this and figure out what happens from here," she sighed, exasperated.

"Okay," he nodded.

Leafy grew tense as she stared at him and folded her arms.

"You can sleep on the couch,"

"Fair enough,"

Leafy walked past, glancing at him she walked by, meeting his eyes and seeing all those hues of orange, red and yellow made her heart ache.

She made her way upstairs and locked her bedroom door behind her as she slid against the door.

What in the name of God was she doing? The man who she has been missing for years is in her living room and she's up here, locking him out.

Of course, she had thought about Firey coming back from the dead before but it was nothing like this, it was always just a fantasy, never something that she believed would come true

She had imagined waking up and him being beside her and she would hold him and kiss him and never let him go again.

She had imagined warmth and joy when she thought about him coming back but in reality it was just cold and awkward.

What was she going to do? She wanted him to stay but if he stays then he would have to see Grove...

Leafy was not ready to deal with that "situation" right now.

Its very clear that Grove is her son so she can't lie about it either.

But if he stayed, he'd be in her life once again and she would find comfort in him once more and his smile would make her melt.

Why was she so mad at him?

Does she even have a right to be mad?

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Of course she does, even though he was "dead" he left her to deal with everything he left behind without any warning or anything when he clearly knew this was coming.

He left her and he knew she would suffer.

No, he didn't want to leave he said that himself and deep down she knew he didn't do it just to hurt her.

One thing she knew for certain was that she still loved him, even after all this time he's the only one for her.

She knows this all too well,she knew deep down she wasn't going to make him leave.

But if she was going to let him stay she needed to lay down ground rules.

She wasn't going to let him get close right away, in case he leaves again. Maybe if she kept him out it will hurt less.

If he shows that he's going to stay she'll let him in but for now it's the couch.

And she definitely wasn't going to let him get close to Grove. He doesn't need to deal with any of Firey's issues. Grove was the most important thing in her left and not even Firey would come between that.

Sighing deeply, she pushed herself off the floor and put on her pajamas to settle into her bed.

So much had happened all at once, it was too much for her to take in.

Firey was alive.

She kept repeating it in her head, over and over because it didn't feel real, people didn't just come back from the dead.

But then again from what she's gathered he wasn't even dead to begin with, for some unknown reason he had to leave in such an extravagant way.

Firey had said he needed to "make sure of some things first" but what could possibly have caused this?

He worked as a detective for the police force, he worked on the more sinister cases but as far as Leafy was aware that was all it was.

Leafy knew there were things about Firey's life that he kept secret, things about his job that she never knew. She didn't like this of course but she had enough respect and trust in him to not go snooping, respect and trust that were somehow still there.

There was so much more to this than she knew.

Was he involved in a scandal? What if he wasn't completely out of danger? Could she be endangering Grove just by letting Firey live with them?

Leafy decided if she sensed even the slightest but of harm coming, Firey would be out of her home in a heartbeat.

She still loved Firey, a lot. But there was no way she was going to let his stupid secrets hurt her son.

She tossed and turned, trying to get comfortable but she just couldn't do it.

In the end she decided to just lay there in silence, thinking about the man down stairs.

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story!
XOXO
LeafCake

Chapter 4

Firey watched Leafy walk up the stairs and winced as he heard the door slam.

That had gone about as well as he had expected. He had known Leafy wouldn't immediately welcome him with open arms but he hadn't expected the "attack"

Then again he had just seemingly appeared in her apartment out of no where.

He walked around a bit, taking it all in.

He was back.

He had always planned to come back but things kept popping up that prevented him from getting to where he actually wanted to be. He had never even wanted to leave in the first place but those damn phone calls kept happening and in the end he had no choice.

Although he had always known that, after being gone for so long and leaving the way he did that Leafy wouldn't let things go back to the way they were but it still hurt him all the same.

His "death" had been harder on her than he had thought it would be. She wasn't pushing him away out of hatred but out of hurt and betrayal and that somehow felt worse.

Even with all of this weighing on him he couldn't hold back the smile that made it's way onto his face. Here he was, finally safe where he was always meant to be and Leafy was as gorgeous as ever.

The apartment hadn't changed much either. It was still sleek and modern, like something out of a magazine Leafy had clearly been looking after it.

As Firey walked silently around the place he started investigating everything. He knew he shouldn't but it was what he was good at and old habits die hard.

He hadn't been in the apartment very long before Leafy came back so he hadn't really taken it all in properly.

He stared at their wedding photo, Leafy smiling her signature smile gazing lovingly at Firey who smiled back at her.

While Firey had been... occupied l, the memories that day kept him going. The thought of Leafy walking down the aisle in her white dress and dancing with her at the reception was the only thing that kept him calm and gave him the urge to fight through everything.

He had never once stopped loving her. Everything he did, he did it with the thought of making it back to her alive.

He would tell her everything as soon as he got word that everything was over and it was safe to do so.

While lost in thought, his eyes trailed to a new photo, a photo that made his body freeze.

The photo had Leafy smiling adoringly at a small green haired baby who gazed in wonder at her in her arms.

Firey's breath hitched as his head began to spin.

Did Leafy have a kid while he was gone? Was she with someone else now?

He had been gone for over four years he had always had the fear that by the time he came back she would have found someone else but the idea of Leafy starting a family in the span of four years didn't seem at all like her.

Of course, he wanted Leafy to be happy and he didn't want her to linger on him and let his "death" hold her back but Leafy always said she wanted to wait a while to have a family.

Firey turned his head and saw a small corner of the living room had

been made into a play area of sorts, littered with action figures, building blocks and children's books.

He turned back to the photo as it dawned on him that the photo was older than he thought.

She couldn't have been cheating right?

No, she wouldn't. Leafy despised cheaters of any kind and Firey was well aware of this.

Firey wracked his brain for any kind of reason that Leafy had a kid and who's it was until his head hurt.

Defeated, he sat went and lay down on the couch to get some sleep and decided he would ask Leafy about the child in the morning.

Now, don't get it wrong. If Leafy had completely moved on and had changed her mind on families and chose to have one with someone, Firey would be happy for her and whoever it was.

His main worry was that if Leafy had really made a family without him he didn't want to ruin it by being a homewrecker and if Leafy asked him to he would leave as soon as she asked.

It would hurt him to let her go but if it was the option that made her the happiest it was the option he would go with.

He loved her with all his heart.

And he always would.

He decided to stop poking around the apartment after he found a small blanket with race cars on it which he used to cover himself as he laid down on the sofa.

The moonlight crept in through the glass doors of the balcony and he struggled to sleep as he tossed and turned.

He gave up trying to get any rest and decided to sit out on the balcony to clear his head.

He was well aware that Leafy would have questions for him in the morning but he also hoped that she wouldn't be cold about it.

Looking out at the city, he took out a cigarette and lit it, a habit he had picked up during his "time away"

"Good to be back"
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Chapter 5

Leafy woke up the next day and recounted the events from last night.

Her "dead" husband had just been standing in her living room and she attacked him with a baseball bat.

She sighed to herself as she pulled herself out of bed and brushed her hair into a loose bun.

She walked down stairs and a pleasant smell wafted in the air.

Coffee and fresh bread.

She stood at the bottom of the stairs entranced by the sight in front of her.

Firey stood in her kitchen, casually making coffee in the way that only he did, getting the coffee to smell absolutely gorgeous with a bag of bread from the bakery down the street and the table set with two plates on it.

For a second she was able to kid herself that nothing had happened, it was just them sitting in their apartment on a Sunday morning.

She shook the thought as Firey looked up and met her eyes.

She sat down at the table, her gaze fixed intently on him as he made his way over with two cups of coffee in his hands.

An awkward silence filled the air between them.

"So, are we going to talk?" he asked uncertainly.

"Yes, we are," she said simply.

"Where have you been?"

Firey sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose. "Leafy, I told you I can't tell you yet. I don't know what's happening yet,"

"Well, what's so bad that you can't tell me because listen closely, if you bring any danger to this household you are out of her," she growled.

"Look it's a difficult story and until I know everything I've been sworn to not say a thing," he defended.

"Am I safe though? Or does your presence here put me or anyone else in danger?" she questioned.

"No, only me," he insisted.

"Why did you show up in the middle of the night? Why not just wait till morning?" she sighed.

"I was using the darkness as a cover, some of the people I was with have identities that need to stay hidden," he explained.

"You scared the hell out me, idiot. I was this close to calling the police!" she exclaimed.

"Sorry," he said sheepishly.

Leafy raised an eyebrow as she stared at him, not knowing what to say next.

"Is that it?" he asked.

Leafy looked away. "I just can't think of anything else to say,"

"Well, can I ask some questions then?"

"Sure,"

"Who's the kid?"

Leafy froze as she knew immediately what he was referring to.

"He's uh-he's mine, his name is Grove,"she stated.

" Who's the dad? "Firey questioned.

"The father of that child is none of your business," she snapped.

"Jeez, sorry I just wanna know if I'd be a homewrecker," he said defensively.

"No, you wouldn't but it's still none of your business," she shrugged.

"How old is he?"

"Not sure, I haven't been keeping track and I'm tired right now," she said as she sipped her coffee "Can we move away from this topic please?"

Reluctantly, Firey agreed. He was definitely going to ask her later though because he wanted to know who the hell Leafy had gotten with. He knew it shouldn't concern him but it just didn't feel right.

"My final question," he began.

"Am I able to stay here?,"

Leafy paused for a moment, letting the idea weigh on her.

If Firey stayed maybe things could return to some form of normalcy, no more being sad about missing him.

On the other hand, Grove was here and things already felt awkward enough.

But where else would he go? As far as the rest of her friends knew, Firey was dead and she had no idea if he would be able to afford a place to stay.

Kicking him to the curb would just be cruel, no matter how much pain she felt.

"Fine, you can stay but there are conditions," she said primly.

"You'll sleep on the couch, bedroom is off limits,"

"That's fair,"

"You'll pay for half of the shopping and I expect you to do some type of house work,"

"Okay, reasonable,"

Leafy sighed deeply as she had to physically prepare herself to lay out the last condition.

"You're not allowed to make any physical contact with me,"

Firey stared at her, stunned.

"No hugs, no hand holding and under no circumstances are you allowed to kiss me,"

"Leafy, I haven't seen you in years, the only thing I wanted to do was kissp you!" he argued.

"You hurt me more than you can possibly fathom, it's a miracle I'm letting you stay in the first place" she snapped.

"So I can't even get one kiss after all this time?" he asked, bewildered.

"No, and I don't know when you will," she stated.

"Okay, that's fine," he sighed sadly.

He looked hurt, he never was one for expressing his emotions properly but Leafy could tell that those words hurt, she couldn't look at him, she felt too ashamed.

They sat in silence for the next while until Leafy got up to collect Grove.

It had hurt her to push Firey away like that, of course she wanted to be close to him

She wanted nothing more than to fall asleep in his arms and feel his fingers running through her hair but she needed to be cautious this time, she couldn't let him hurt her again.

She thought about what had happened when she was told he had

died...

It was a car crash apparantly but she wasn't allowed to see his remains, the police had told her it was for "public safety" looking back now, it was probably the way he left undetected.

Her world had gone dark that day, she went home to an empty apartment and she cried into his clothes. The place still smelled like him and all of his belongings were still there as though he had just left for a moment and would use them again.

After some time, his scent grew fainter and most of his things were put in storage except for a shirt he used to sleep in and a heavy rain jacket that would wear occasionally.

The shirt was for the unending, lonely nights that became all too common but its softness and its familiarity gave her comfort that she needed.

Coiny and Pin were there for her through all this, they bought groceries, checked in on her and never made her feel ashamed of her tears and for that she was eternally greatful.

All of her friends were like anchors for her during that time, Golfball with her visits, Flower with the invites to hang out and show off her latest designs and Gelatin and Blocky with their infectious laughter.

Then some time later she had that doctors appointment and "it" happened.

But that day ultimately saved her, being told that she was going to bring another life into the world gave her energy to keep going, to work hard and ensure that her child lived a happy and comfortable life.

And once again her friends proved what absolute saints they were by offering help and advice, maybe it was her hormone imbalance but she found herself crying tears of joy when she was with them those days.

She decided to go against things a bit and gave Grove two godfathers and two godmothers, Coiny and Gelatin, Pin and Flower.

If she could she would have made them all godparents but they all assured her that as long as Leafy and the kid were healthy, they didn't mind.

Grove just calls them all Aunt or Uncle or whatever they requested, Blocky, for example, had insisted on "Cool Guy".

She laughed to herself as she remembered how they all reacted the first time they saw Grove, all of them fawning over him and trying their best to hold him gently, even the ever-stoic Golfball fell to the curse of "the cute baby"

Grove was cute, Leafy was not ashamed in the pride she had for her son. He had the cutest little nose and the softest light-green hair it made her heart melt.

A few weeks after he was born, when he was asleep in his tiny bed, Leafy would just stare at him in awe, listening to his soft breathing and seeing his small, chubby hand clutch her finger.

People could say a lot about her, but no one could ever say she didn't adore her son.
...

Maybe in time she would let Firey develop some kind of relationship with Grove, maybe she'd even let him into her bed again but she couldn't promise things.

For her sake and Grove's.

She knocked on Pin's door and there he was, her little knight with his plush fish and his Super Rangers backpack with a sweet, little grin lighting up his face.

"I hope he wasn't too much trouble," she told Coiny.

"Nah, I love hanging out with the little guy! It's Pin who caused me issues," he gestured to Pin, who sported lopsided sunglasses and messy hair.

"Oh wow, you've been nursing her and looking after my kid? You must be magic or something," Leafy laughed.

"Grove was really helpful, he's been quiet and got water for Pin, he also tidied up without being asked," Coiny smiled while Grove gave a thumbs up.

Pin snaked her way to the door with a blanket wrapped around her and leaned against Coiny.

"Quit bad mouthing me, I'm sick," she whined.

"Yeah, alcohol poisoning," Coiny scoffed.

"That is so rude!" Pin gasped before turning to Leafy.

"Anyways Leafy, Grove was a massive help all morning, he's such a good kid, you're doing great," she said hoarsely.

A soft smile crept onto Leafy's face as she gazed lovingly at Grove.

"You have no idea how much those words mean to me," she sighed.

...

After some heavy traffic, Leafy and Grove were in the car park of the apartment complex, walking to the elevator.

"Grove, mama needs to talk to you," she said, lowering herself so she was at eye level with him.

Grove nodded, indicating that he was listening.

"We're going to have someone else live with us from now on, is that okay with you?" she asked.

"Mhm hm, it's okay but only if he's nice," he responded.

"He is, he's a good guy but I want you to stay away from him, just for a little while. Can you do that for me?" she questioned.

"Yes, mama but why?" he wondered.

Leafy paused, trying to think of an excuse that wouldn't upset Grove and make him be a brat toward Firey.

"If you get too close, he'll steal your dinosaurs!" she whispered.

"No! Not my Dinos," Grove exclaimed worriedly as he clutched his backpack tightly.

"It's unlikely though, just keep being a good boy," Leafy reassured as they got out the elevator at their floor.

Walking into the apartment, Leafy held her breath as Firey's attention was taken from the dishes he was washing and his eyes fell on the little boy just across from him.

The silence in the air was eerie and tense as the two looked at eachother.

All that was heard was a soft, little gasp followed by,

"You're the man from the photo with mama,"
= = = =

Chapter 6

"Firey, this is Grove,"

"Hey," the flame haired man said awkwardly.

"Hi," Grove responded quietly.

...

The atmosphere was very awkward with no one saying anything for a few minutes before Leafy decided she couldn't deal with it.

"Yep, Grove here is my little knight, he protects me from all the bad guys," she announced as she pulled Grove close.

"Doubt any bad guys will come near you two now that I'm here," Firey smiled.

"But, you look kinda scary," Grove said suspiciously to which Firey gave a confused look.

"Hah, Grove you're always so silly," Leafy laughed awkwardly.

"I'm gonna go play with my toys that definitely are not dinosaurs," Grove called as he ran to his room but not before sneakily sticking his tongue out at Firey.

"He's cute, I can see the resemblance," Firey noted.

"Yeah, and you'll need to get used to living with him so no violent stuff on TV, no cursing and it's quiet after eight o'clock," Leafy insisted in an authoritive tone.

"Damn, okay," Firey said, holding back a laugh.

"Don't laugh at me! I'm trying to raise that kid right," she snapped.

"Sorry, you just sound like a mom I never thought I'd hear you talk like that," he chuckled.

"There's a lot of things happening that I never thought would happen," Leafy said shortly.

Firey shut up after that and Leafy walked past him to make some lunch for Grove.

After a while, Firey put on his jacket and headed to the door.

"I'm going out, I'll be back soonish" he called as he left.

The door had closed before Leafy could say goodbye and she felt a pang of guilt.

Grove came down the stairs and walked over to Leafy.

"Mama, are you okay?" he asked as he hugged her.

"Yes, Mama just has to deal with some big-girl feelings,"

...

Firey walked down the street, thinking of Leafy and the little boy who clung to her leg.

It was definitely Leafy's kid, he had the green hair, her complexion and his eyebrows knitted together the same way hers did.

But who in the name of God was the dad?

Grove didn't have Leafy's eyes just little flecks of green and his hair had hints of yellow or orange with a dusting of freckles on his nose and cheeks, he was a top class detective why couldn't he find any clues?

Whoever the father was he clearly wasn't that involved with Leafy or Grove, there were no photos or anything to indicate he lived with them.

Maybe it was from a one-night stand and that's why Leafy was a bit

defensive about saying who the dad was.

He wasn't upset that Leafy had been with someone else, he had accepted that given he didn't know how long he'd be gone for, it was very likely but he still wanted to know who the bastard was.

While being lost in thought, Firey almost didn't notice the second pair of footfalls he heard from beside him.

"You're late," the mysterious person said.

"Sorry, got held up," Firey responded.

"How are things?"

"Leafy's a bit cold but I expected that, she had a kid too,"

"Oh my, have you beaten up the father?"

"No sign of him, I was wracking my brain about it just before you showed up,"

"Interesting, so she's letting you stay?"

"Yeah, but there's conditions, don't really wanna get into it. On a different note, any updates?"

"Not really, we think we're tracking some of them but there's still too many powerful ones left, this all still needs to be kept under wraps,"

"Leafy's been bugging me for any idea of where I've been, I still can't say anything?"

"Too risky, they'll do anything to go out with style and taking people like you out would be like a blessing to them, besides if they somehow find Leafy we can't promise her safety,"

Firey took a deep breath before kicking a glass bottle against a wall and it shattered, sending small chuncks of glass flying around, one slicing his cheek.

"When will this all be over? I'm so sick of this hiding and walking on

eggshells around my own wife,"

"Patience Detective, just a little more work and you'll have the life you've been crying for,"

"I better and after this is all over, if I don't get what I need so that Leafy and I can live comfortably, I'll hunt you down,"

"Hm, I'd expect nothing less,"

...

"And once we're done, I'm resigning,"

"Hm, interesting, it's a lengthy process though,"

"Whatever, this title doesn't mean shit anymore, I'll be happy once it's gone"

"Suit yourself,"

"Is that it?"

"Yep, I'll keep you updated on any discoveries that are made or any meetings that take place,"

"Thanks"

And with that Firey turned the corner as though the conversation never happened.

...

He had to walk the long way home just to be certain he wasn't followed. The risk of him being followed grew smaller everyday but if he let his guard down now it could be fatal.

By the time he made it home it was almost evening, he looked up at the balcony and saw Leafy with a glass of wine in her hand and the other holding Grove up so he could see the sunset.

She looked perfect, the warm glow of the sun hit her face, radiating her beauty. She looked so gentle with Grove, they looked like

something you'd find in a magazine.

Firey let himself in and decided it would be best not to go looking for Leafy.

He wanted to do something for her as a thank you and maybe as a starting point for trying to bring back some normality.

He searched through the kitchen and found some decent ingredients that he could use to make a pretty nice dinner.

He heard quick, little footsteps and Grove came running in, followed by Leafy.

"You were gone for a while,"Leafy remarked.

"I wanted to get some fresh air," Firey responded.

"Hm, what are you doing?" Leafy asked suspiciously.

"I was going to ask if I could make dinner for you," he shrugged.

"I am perfectly capable of making dinner for myself, thank you very much," she said shortly.

Firey raised his eyebrow in a skeptical manner while Leafy glanced away sheepishly.

"Please? I won't sit with you and eat but I just wanted to show my gratitude for letting me stay," he explained.

Leafy shifted on her legs awkwardly as she contemplated his offer.

"Fine, but you aren't eating with us, Grove and I will be on the balcony you can sit at the table," she said.

"Okay, that's fine," he smiled.

He got to work chopping and prepping and from behind the corner, Leafy couldn't help but watch has he made the food.

He had a smile on his face and he began to hum quietly.

She stared intently, unaware of the smile that crept onto her own face, she couldn't help it.

"What are you doing, mama?" Grove said in a whisper but Leafy almost jumped out of her skin.

"Wha-mama wasn't doing anything," she said nervously.

"Why were you looking at the Dinosaur Stealer?" Grove asked while trying to raise his eyebrow, a skill he lacked just like his mother so he just had both brows raised.

By now, Firey had looked up to see what was going on, still with that stupid smile on his face.

Leafy, now rather embarrassed scooped Grove up and carried him to the balcony.

She sat and watched as he played with his toys, content with the warm evening sun on her face.

Grove got up to go to the bathroom but he quickly came back and informed Leafy that Firey was in there, doing a bad job at being a doctor.

Leafy was confused and headed to the bathroom to find Firey with the basket of medical supplies trying desperately to figure out what he needed to cover a cut on his face that Leafy hadn't noticed.

"Hey Leafy, you wouldn't know anything about bandages right?" Firey asked sheepishly

Leafy sighed in frustration as she walked over to him, rooted through the basket and pulled out the plaster he needed the grabbed the others from his hand and shoving them back in.

"Ugh, you haven't even cleaned it yet, it's gotta be at least a few hours old by now," she groaned.

She found some antibacterial cleaner and applied to a soft cloth which she held to his face.

Firey winced at the pain as Leafy simply stared at him.

"Calm down, it'll be over soon," she said with a slight tenderness to her voice.

Firey held his breath as Leafy cleaned the wound and gently applied the plaster to it.

Once she was done she kept her palm against his cheek, neither saying a word just looking into the other's eyes.

"Thank you for coming home,"

= =
Mister Detective can't apply bandages.

Hope you enjoyed that chapter and the Firey lore

XOXO
LeafCake

Chapter 7

Leafy's alarm rudely woke her and she forced herself out of bed and into her work clothes.

She needed to get Grove up and ready for preschool and ensure he had a lunch ready.

She walked across to Grove's room and gently woke him. He crawled into her lap and nuzzled into her as he yawned and let his eyes adjust to the light.

"Good morning Grovey, you're like a little fluff-ball," she laughed as she neatened his hair.

"Good morning mama," he said tiredly.

"Come on, let's get you dressed," she smiled.

Once Grove was dressed Leafy headed downstairs to get him some cereal and make him some lunch but when she turned the corner of the kitchen, Firey was washing things up.

"What did you do?" Leafy asked.

"Well, it's Monday so I figured you had work and I made you some breakfast," he replied, holding a plate with chopped fruit, yoghurt and French toast.

"Oh, thank you but I can't eat it, I have to make sure Grove gets his own breakfast and a lunch," she sighed.

"Taken care of," Firey smiled, slightly proudly.

Leafy walked over and saw a smaller plate with some cereal and chopped apples and strawberries with some water.

"And you made him lunch?" Leafy questioned bewilderedly.

"Yeah, just some sandwiches with salmon, some spare fruit and one of those yoghurt tube things," he said pointing at Grove's lunchbox.

"How did you know he liked salmon?," she asked with a suspicious tone.

"I think I woke him while I was making the French toast because he came downstairs to see what I was doing and so I asked him what he wanted on a sandwich ," he shrugged.

Leafy sat at the table and took a small bite of the beautifully presented plate in front of her and to her dismay, it was delicious.

She hated the fact that effort was put into it, she hated how he did it out of his own will, it just made it harder for her to keep her walls up.

Grove waddled in and he eagerly went over to Firey to get his lunchbox.

Leafy rested her head against her hand as she watched them high-five, Grove had clearly let go of the whole "Dino-Stealer" thing and Firey seemed happy that Grove wasn't shy.

Although it was a cute sight, she was going to be late if she didn't get a move on. She told Grove to eat his breakfast while she went to the bathroom to freshen up and put some makeup on.

A little while later, she was buttoning Grove's shirt up in the hall, slightly panicking as she always did.

Firey suddenly tapped her on the shoulder, holding out a small lunchbox and a water bottle.

"You never mentioned your own lunch so I made this," he said.

Leafy felt her heart clench as she tried to figure out what to say. The small but sweet smile on his face didn't help things at all.

"Thank you," she answered, much ruder than she had meant to then

she placed it in her handbag.

"Have a good day," he said.

"You too," she nodded.

"I'll have a good day too!" Grove exclaimed excitedly.

Leafy sighed fondly as she smiled at Grove, saying goodbye to Firey before leaving for the car park.

"He's a good guy, mama," Grove chirpped from the backseat.

"He is Grove, but mama just needs to make extra certain he's a really good guy," she responded.

"He didn't take my dinosaurs and he gave me salmon, I like him," he stated.

"Hm, that's nice," Leafy said simply.

Grove began to play with his toys as Leafy's thoughts trailed elsewhere.

She dropped Grove off at his preschool then pulled out her phone and texted Firey.

What's the deal with you being alive? Are other people allowed to know?

A few minutes later she got a response.

Yeah, I guess but like don't go telling everyone yk?

Okay thanks

That was all she needed to know, she rushed to work and immediately went searching for someone.

"Gelatin!" she called.

"What's up Leafster?" he grinned.

"Come here," she said, gesturing at him.

Once he was close enough, she looked around to make sure no one was listening.

"Firey is alive,"

"What,"

Gelatin stared at her like she'd gone crazy. "Leafy that's not possible,"

"That's what I thought but he's in the apartment right now and he's very much real," she insisted.

"Leafy, are you okay? People don't just come back from the dead, are you certain it's him," he asked as he shook her by the shoulders.

"It is him Gelatin, he was in my apartment on Saturday night and I nearly hit him with a baseball bat," she whisper-shouted.

"Leafy, it can't be him, he's dead," Gelatin sighed in frustration.

"No, it is him! There's something weird going on but he never actually died in the first place," she explained

"Leafy, you're delierious," Gelatin said as he checked her temperature.

"No, you can come to my place after work and see him yourself!" she said as she stamped her foot.

"Fine, but if he's not there or its some random guy I'm getting you therapy," he groaned, finally giving up.

"Meet me at my car after work, I'll drive," she said before walking off.

Gelatin gave her a worried look then went about his day, but he was still worried about his clearly insane cousin.

As usual the day moved slowly, being a secretary somehow felt stressful and slow at the same time but it's what let her keep the nice apartment and allowed her to send Grove to a decent preschool so she ultimately didn't mind.

Eventually the day ended and Leafy and Gelatine sat in her car

wishing the traffic would go away.

"So, how your mom?" Gelatin asked to break the silence.

"She's pretty good, herself and my dad moved to the coast a few months ago so they've just been enjoying the sun," she shrugged.

"Nice and how's Grove?"

"He's great actually, he's eating really well and he's had his injections,"

"Leafy, if Firey is actually alive and in your apartment, where has he been the past few years,"

"He hasn't told me but I'll find out eventually,"

"So, he's living with you?"

"Don't worry, he's sleeping on the couch and I'm not getting anywhere near him,"

"Really? What happened to the ever-loving Leafy?"

"I can't risk it Gelatin, you saw how badly I dealt with his *death* I can't take it again,"

"How long do you think you'll last?"

"He's hardly even been here two days and he's already making it difficult to push him away,"

Gelatin nodded thoughtfully but then got distracted and started singing along to the radio, Leafy laughed at him, glad that he never changed.

...

Soon they were in the elevator, nearing Leafy's floor and Gelatin felt himself grow slightly nervous.

"Relax, Gelatin," Leafy said under her breath and he gave her a quick thumbs-up.

Leafy opened the door of her apartment with Gelatin walking behind her.

"Hey Firey, can you come here for a minute?" she called.

"Okay," came his voice from the living room.

Gelatin froze when he saw Firey, he walked up to him and squished his face the pinched him.

"Ow, what the hell was that for, Gelatin?" Firey yelped.

"Oh, my god. You're actually alive," he said, absolutely shocked.

"Yeah, I think I know that," Firey glared.

"No-wha, you died," Gelatin turned to Leafy "This guy was legally dead,"

"I'm still not used to it," Leafy sighed.

"So, what were you doing all this time? You can't just up and leave people," Gelatin said, suddenly becoming much more pissed looking.

"Look, I had to leave because of my job. Things got too bad for me to stay and keep Leafy safe. I can't say anything about it yet but I didn't leave on my own will," Firey explained.

"Very convenient," Gelatin snapped.

"Okay, let's keep it relaxed here. Gelatin, can I get you anything," Leafy intervened quickly.

"Oh, no thank you I've got stuff at home," he replied, "Speaking of which, I hadn't meant to stay long I should probably leave,"

"Would you like a lift home?" Leafy offered.

"Nah, I think the train ride will help me process this,"he said.

He walked to Firey again pulled him in a tight hug then whispered harshly into his ear.

"Don't you dare do anything like that to her again,"

Firey didn't get a chance to respond before Gelatin pulled back and patted his shoulder with a grin on his face. "Good to see you though!"

"Bye Leafy, see you tomorrow!" he called as he left the apartment.

...

"He can be scary when he wants to be," Firey coughed as he adjusted his sweater.

"Eh, you gotta love him though, he's looking out for me," she shrugged happily.

"How sweet of him," he said sarcastically. "Do you want to herbal tea, I made some for myself earlier,"

"Thanks, that'd be nice," Leafy accepted.

"It'll be five minutes," Firey told her, walking to the kettle.

"Grove is gonna be dropped home soon, by the way," Leafy informed him.

"Leafy, please don't make me talk to anyone else today," he implored

"Don't worry, I usually pick him up but I asked Flower if she could do it for me today, I'll just meet her outside," she assured.

Leafy walked upstairs to get into more comfortable clothes but there was something off about the apartment, it all looked shinier...

"Hey, did you clean today?" she asked.

"Yeah, I mopped,vaccumed, dusted and tried to make things look neater but there wasn't much to be done since you keep it all pretty neat already," he stated.

"Oh uh, thank you," she nodded.

Leafy closed the door behind her then flopped onto the bed, face first.

"Damn you Firey, you make it harder and harder to push you away," she groaned into her pillow.
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Chapter 8

As the days pased, Leafy realised Gelatin probably wasn't the best person to tell about Firey being back.

He never was one for keeping secrets, he didn't do it because he wanted to be a jerk, he was just very excitable and couldn't keep things held in.

All of their friends came over to see Firey and after hearing Firey's "I-can't-tell-anyone-anything-about-why I-was-gone-but-please-know-I-didn't-want-to-leave-in-the-first-place" speech multiple times Leafy could almost recite the whole thing by heart herself.

It was fresh and exciting news for everyone else but for Leafy and Firey it was becoming tiring and tedious. Unlike Leafy, who loved chatting with people and thrived in social situations, Firey was not a fan of constantly talking to people because he felt that social interactions were stupid.

After two weeks of non-stop visits, sometimes multiple people in one day Firey wanted to bash his head into a wall. He couldn't explain it, he had been through pure hell while he was gone but he still couldn't deal with large numbers of social gatherings, it just didn't make sense.

Leafy's job involved her talking to lots of people everyday, talking to other people gave her energy but she could understand that it wasn't for everyone. She had no idea what Firey had been through while he was gone but she could assume he needed and wanted to rest so she gently asked if people could cut back on the visits for a while and thankfully, they did.

Firey slept, alot. On weekeds, Leafy would often come back from her errands to see Firey snoozing on the couch, in positions that looked painful on his neck and back. She began to feel bad for making him

sleep on an uneven surface that didn't even let him stretch out so she decided to do something to help him.

...

"Leafy, what is this?" Firey asked in disbelief.

"It's your bed," she replied as she presented a decent quality fold out mattress with a new pillow and blanket.

"So, I've gone from the couch to the floor?" he scoffed. "I can't tell which is more demoralising,"

"Be greatful that you have a bed to sleep on now at least," she scolded

"Hm true, thanks Leafs," he shrugged, folding the bed out then laying down on it.

"It's actually pretty comfortable if I'm being honest," he said with a tone of surprise.

"Yeah I'd hope so, it wasn't exactly cheap," she said before kneeling down to squish the mattress.

"I feel tired already," Firey said as he pulled the blanket up with a contended smile.

"You've been sleeping a lot lately, are you feeling alright?" Leafy asked.

"Yeah I'm fine, I'm just making the most of being able to rest after all this time," he breathed, nestling in.

Leafy sat down beside the mattress, giving Firey a concerned look.

"What were you doing all this time that's got you acting like this? You never used to sleep early," she sighed sadly.

Firey looked up at her then looked around the room, thinking to himself before he said anything else.

"I was running from people, to say the least. There were times when I

didn't sleep for days on end," he said simply.

"And even when I did sleep, I had to do it with one eye open and it was never anywhere comfortable, and then there was the-" Firey cut himself off.

"There was the what?" Leafy urged.

"Sorry, that's part of what I can't tell you yet," he frowned slightly.

Leafy's eyebrow were knitted together worriedly, she had a basic understanding of why Firey couldn't tell her anything yet but she hated the secrets all the same.

Firey smiled softly at her as she sighed, stood up and walked away.

She went to the bathroom and splashed some water on her face. It was quiet as she stared at herself in the mirror.

Was she being too harsh on him by making him sleep on the floor? Even though she had gotten him a comfier place to sleep she still felt bad, he was her husband after all.

She didn't know what he'd been through in the time he was gone, if he'd been through something horrific was she just adding to the things that affected him?

Her mind had finally registered that he was back and the chances of him leaving again decreased everyday but there was still a lingering fear in the back of her mind.

She wanted to be a good wife, she wanted to be there for him, she wanted him to tell her what the hell happened so they could get better.

She left the bathroom and walked to the living room where to her surprise, Firey was fast asleep.

Soft snoring came from the mattress and Leafy quietly crept over and kneeled beside the sleeping man.

Leafy watched his chest rise up and down, his heart beating in his

chest, a sure sign that he was alive that somehow still brought comfort to Leafy that she wasn't insane.

Firey looked so peaceful under the blanket, his face void of any worry or stress, his muscles relaxed and his slightly ruffled hair made him look like a handsome, marble statue.

Slowly, she reached out and ran her fingers through his hair, repeating the motion as she took in his features.

"I want you to tell me everything one day, so I can help you deal with it," she whispered.

"I swear I'll help, I'll help no matter what you say,"

She placed a hand over her eyes to stop the tears from falling on the ground or on him.

"I love you and I'm sorry, I'm sorry I'm pushing you away, I'm sorry I haven't kissed you yet, it's all too painful, I just don't know what to do," she said in a whisper that was barely heard by anyone except her.

"You've always been so confusing to me," she whispered.

Her shoulders shook as the silent sobs caused a pain in her chest, her breath hitched as she slowly moved away from him and stood up.

...

In her room, Leafy held Firey's Shirt close to her as she sniffled quietly into it, curled up in the fetal position, her throat making strange croaking sounds as she attempted to stifle her crying.

She was an idiot, she was crying over someone who was just one flight of stairs away, if she really wanted his comfort why was she forcing him to sleep alone?

She didn't know, she was just stupid. She wanted him beside her so badly but some ignorant part of her didn't let her.

She made this choice, it was because of her he was sound asleep in a

crappy little mattress instead of holding her, what kind of wife did that to her husband?

He had quite literally come back from the dead and here she was being a cold bitch to him, if anyone else had been given a second chance with a person they loved, they definitely wouldn't do what she did.

What would happen if she crawled in beside him? Would he let her stay beside him? Or would be mad at her for "messing him around"?

The idea of his warmth was inviting, it promised safety and possibly, a night that she could sleep without waking up in the middle of it.

Just as she pushed her covers back, her bedroom door opened and she immediately lay back down.

She heard soft footsteps and suddenly Grove's little face was about a meter away from her.

"Grove, what are you doing up?" she whispered softly.

"I think I heard you crying, mama," he responded.

"Oh, no I wasn't crying, don't worry," she said assuringly. "You can go back to bed,"

"I want you to be happy, mama," he sniffed in a small voice.

"Aw baby, I am happy it's all okay," she smiled as she reached out a hand for him to take.

Her heart felt like it would burst as he held her hand and squeezed it gently.

"Do you want to go back to your room or do you want to stay here?" Leafy asked.

"Stay here," Grove nodded.

Leafy smiled at him as he clambered into the bed and snuggled in, he wriggled a bit until he was tucked comfortably against Leafy, his

small arms hugging her as much as they could.

"You okay, Grovey?" she questioned.

Grove murmured in response, his eyes closing and he yawned.

Leafy held him close caressing his soft hair and finally found herself dozing off.

...

Outside the bedroom, Firey smiled as she shut the door happy he had finally done something right.

He closed Grove's door too before he snuck back downstairs and back to his mattress.

He stared up at the ceiling, feeling a lonely feeling in his chest that he couldn't seem to chase away.

He would tell her the things she wanted to know, he'd tell her all of it.

He wouldn't make her cry anymore, if she was going to be there for him he'd be there for her, those were the vows he had made.

And he wasn't going to break them.

Never again.
= =

Leafy's such a cry baby gahddamn.

Hope you enjoyed that chapter!

XOXO
LeafCake

Chapter 9

"So how do you feel about him being back?" Pin asked as she sipped her coffee.

"I don't know, I mean of course I'm happy that he's not dead but I don't know it's just... complicated I guess," Leafy sighed.

"How so?" Pin wondered.

"Well, I have no idea what to do, do I act like nothing happened or do I keep doing what I'm doing?" Leafy said as she rubbed her temple.

"What have you been doing?" Pin questioned.

"I haven't been loving him, if that makes sense. I've had him sleeping on the couch, I haven't let him anywhere near me romantically," Leafy explained.

"But why, if Coiny died then came back to life, I'd be all over him," Pin said.

"I want to do that but I keep saying to myself I'm doing this because I'm scared of being hurt again, like I said I really don't know what I'm doing," Leafy sighed deeply.

"See, there comes a point where it stops being about you protecting yourself and it starts being you indirectly punishing him for something he clearly didn't want to do," Pin stated.

"Maybe it's a bit of both," Leafy said guiltily.

"We don't know what he went through, so no offense but there's a chance you're just being cruel," Pin noted.

"But how can I know, he's not telling me anything at all," Leafy grumbled.

"Yeah yeah, he told me that he's waiting but you're his wife, surely there must be something he can tell you?" Pin said thoughtfully.

"No idea, I can't get anything out of him," Leafy complained.

Pin thought for a minute before a sly grin made it's way on her face.

"Well, there might be a way for you to get some information," she smirked.

"How?" Leafy asked suspiciously.

"People are more honest when they're tired right? So just find a way to... *tire him out*," Pin said sweetly

"No way Pin, that's just all kinds of wrong!" Leafy exclaimed.

"I mean it would work though, after you're... you know done, you can ask him and I'm certain he'll say something, it always works for me," Pin laughed slightly.

"Pin, I think you're evil," Leafy said, unimpressed.

"Look, just keep it in mind okay? It might also help you let yourself get close to him again, maybe that's what your mind wants, an excuse," Pin shrugged.

"Hm, maybe," Leafy said quietly.

The conversation moved to different topics but Leafy did keep what Pin said in the back of her mind.

Maybe Pin was right, maybe she didn't actually want to know where he'd been or what he'd done, maybe she just was too scared to approach him.

Would she be a bad person if she actually did this? No, she was just trying to get information that she deserved to know, depending on what he told her would change how she dealt with things.

As they left the coffee shop, Pin offered to take Grove for the night, an offer that Leafy accepted so it was arranged that Coiny would

drive to Leafy's apartment, pick up Grove and take him back to himself and Pin's apartment.

Just her and Firey in the apartment, exactly how it used to be...

Leafy had drank some of her wine as a slight confidence booster and sat down on the couch across from Firey who leaned against the wall on his pull out bed.

"You can sit here with me if you want," Leafy offered

Firey looked up from his phone and smiled. "Really?"

Leafy hummed as she nodded and Firey pushed himself up and sat on the opposite end of the couch.

She watched him from the corner of her eye, he wasn't doing anything to get close to her, he just sat there. He was doing exactly what she had told him.

She moved closer to him, no reaction.

She moved even closer, turning her body slightly so she faced him, still nothing.

She was now right where he was sitting, her hand close to his and she could feel the warmth he emitted.

"What are you doing?" he asked finally.

"Stretching," she lied.

"You're awfully close," he noted.

"Is that a crime?" she questioned.

"No, but I thought you didn't want to be close," he recalled.

"You talk too much sometimes," she smiled as she shifted around and was essentially in a crawling position with her hands by his lap.

The expression on his face was rather cute to Leafy, he looked confused but mystified in a strange way but very much unsure of

what to do.

Their faces were barely inches apart with their noses almost touching as Leafy did her best to look as attractive as possible.

"You said you wanted nothing more than to kiss me. Well, I can give you exactly what you want," she said seductively.

"But-I what about the rules you told me?" he laughed nervously.

"I've had enough time to warm up to you again, I think we can scrap them," she whispered.

She pressed her lips against his and she felt a tightness in her chest that felt surprisingly nice, she hadn't kissed him in so long she had forgotten how sweet it was.

Firey pulled her closer but kept the kiss gentle, scared he would do something wrong.

Ecstatic, elated, happy, there was no one word that could describe how he felt in that moment. He had wanted this for so long, finally having it didn't feel real.

He pulled away from the kiss to smile lovingly at Leafy as he brushed some hair out of her face.

"I waited so long for that," he breathed.

Leafy took in the soffteness on his face, there was nothing hidden, there was only his love at the forefront of everything, he simply loved her.

She saw this and felt a wave of guilt crash down onto her.

She hated that she had initiated this just so she could weasel information out of him, she had tainted their first kiss in years.

She hid her face in his chest for fear that he would somehow see what she had actually intended of doing.

Screw her plan, screw what Pin said, she didn't care about any of it

right now, she'd find out one day but for now all she wanted was for Firey to kiss her again and make her feel better.

He ran his hand through her hair, the repetitive motion reminding her of how he used to comfort her and she clutched his shirt tightly, fists in a ball, scared if she let go he'd leave.

Using his other hand, he cupped her face and gently lifted it so she looked at him again, still with that soft, loving smile on his lips.

The two gazed at each other for a few minutes, taking the other in and making the most of their first tender moment they had in years together.

Firey couldn't believe how pretty Leafy was, her eyes were a gorgeous mix of greens, like a forest in the sunlight after a fresh rain, her skin was soft to the touch and having her in his arms once more felt so right.

"I love you, Leafy,"

Those words meant so much to both of them, to Firey it was like a final stamp of approval to show that he had made it back to her and he was still able to say those words to her face, a chance he often thought he wouldn't have again.

For Leafy, it confirmed that they both hadn't lost what they had when they got married, she had wanted those words for so long, now here he was back from the dead and still loving her.

It was such an easy thing to say but it meant the absolute world, neither had allowed themselves to hope they'd hear those words again but the course of their lived had decided to be kind to them for once, allowing both to feel genuinely happy for the first time since Firey had left.

Leafy smiler back at him, trusting him and once more in her mind, promising herself to him, she was done pushing him away and pretending she didn't want him so much she wanted to scream, she was going to let herself endulge in his warmth, she deserved to be happy, they both did.

"I love you too, Firey,"

She kissed him again, slightly deeper this time but unable to fight away the smile that interrupted it.

"I'm sorry, I'm just really happy," she laughed.

"Please don't be sorry," he said as he kissed the top of her head.

They spent the rest of the night in each other's arms, completely fading from the world around them, the only thing that mattered was the person in front of them.

Falling asleep tangled up in Firey's warmth was quite possibly one of the best feelings Leafy had felt in a while...

But nothing would ever best the euphoric feeling she felt in her chest when she woke up and he was right there, just as wrapped up in her body as she was with his.

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Chapter 10

"Tell us what we wanna know, Detective Man and you'll get off a lot easier,"

"Over my dead body,"

"Oh, it will be if you don't start talking,"

Firey couldn't see who he was talking to on account of the tight cloth that covered his eyes but sure as hell felt the kick to his stomach that knocked over the chair he was tied to.

He was winded and the vomit that came from his throat felt disgustingly acidic. He was a mess, lying in a tied up ball on the ground.

"You're supposed to be one of the best, huh? Imagine if everyone could see you now," the unknown person laughed sadistically.

Firey wriggled helplessly, trying to escape his ties as he heard footsteps approach him, he winced as he felt a cigarette be put out on his shoulder.

The person left the room, leaving him in a puddle of his own blood and sick with water from the broken pipes leaking down on him, if all of this continued he'd die of hypothermia before they got any info out of him.

Once more he attempted to struggle by thrashing around but it only resulted in him smacking his head off the dirty, mould stained wall.

It was freezing, the sweat that dropped from his body was cold, his hair was damp and dirty, everything seemed to cling to him like he was covered in a layer of honey.

A year ago, he was safe and warm in his nice apartment with his wife, now here he was stuck in the basement of a drug cartel, covered in filth, on the verge of passing out from the sheer chills and pains he felt.

He was crying, a top-level investigator like him was crying, ugly, heavy sobs that sounded more like wheezing due to the damage his airways received from multiple chokings and the icy air.

How long had he been here? He had no idea, he lost count a few days in, so far he estimated a few weeks, at least.

Was no one coming to save him? Why weren't they attempting a rescue, he still had the tracker that had been inserted into his ankle, surely they could find him.

He had no idea how far he'd been taken, it happened after the assassination attempt had gone wrong, their cover had been blown, B had accidentally set off the bomb too early and they immediately became targets.

It turned into a bloodbath.

There was only three of them on the team and a whole group of ganglords against them.

Bullets went everywhere, Woody had managed to take a few out but the last Firey saw of him, he had half of his brain splattered on the wall.

Firey had taken the gun from his hand and hit a few of them, dual wielding with his own gun, but the recoil had damaged his shoulders.

In a last ditch effort and possibly a moment of insanity, Detective B had set off the backup bomb, blowing half the place up and knocking Firey down in the blast.

He had been thrown against a pile of boxes, hitting his head off a metal pipe, leaving him dazed and fading in and out of consciousness.

Through the smoke and haze he made out a large figure walking

toward him with a gun in their hand but just before they took their shot, Firey heard a muffled shout and he was roughly picked up, taken out into the cold night then thrown into a van and that was all he remembered from that day.

He had no idea if B managed to make it out of there but that was all Firey could place his hopes on. If B made it back able to talk then the chances of rescue increased dramatically.

He needed to find a way out, he couldn't let his resolve falter because if he did that, he'd just be killing himself.

He was going to get back home, he was going to get back to Leafy and nothing was going to stop him.

Just as he strained and attempted to snap the ropes he heard the door open again and he he heard those footsteps he had grown to hate, it was funny how he had no idea what this man looked like but Firey still wanted him dead.

"Ah, ah trying to get out again, are we?" the man tutted.

Firey gave no reply, as he heard the footsteps get closer he spat.

"Disgusting, but you're a fiesty one I'll give you that, you've lasted longer than I thought," the man said with cruelty.

Yet again, Firey gave no reply but he felt the hairs on his body stand on end as he heard the man crouch infront of him, his face so close, he could smell his horrific, alchol and cigarette breath that made him feel sick and he shuddered as he tapped his face.

"As much as I enjoy fighters, the attitude needs to go, so I think it's time to *play with the water again*"

...

Firey sighed as he walked down the empty streets, trying to clear his head.

It was so strange how a bustling city can feel like a different world at night, hardly anyone respectable around but the streetlights and neon

signs breathed light into the quiet.

He finally stopped at a bridge that he felt was a nice spot to watch the cargo ships be prepped and loaded at the decks and light his cigarette.

He took a deep breath, letting the hot, ashy feeling enter his lungs, watching the smoke rise into the clear, starry night.

He had no idea when he started doing this or why he kept doing it, he hated the feeling and it didn't do him much good but he continued it for some unknown reason.

He sighed as he leaned on the railing, examining the water beneath him as it shimmered and reflected the lights around it.

It looked freezing and dark, it scared him.

He didn't like dark or wet things, they made him feel small, they confused him.

He took the cigarette from his mouth and tossed it into the water, watching it float away under the bridge.

His grip on the rail tightened as he felt a surge of emptiness hit him.

"There are bodies down there," he thought to himself.

How many people had met their end or were thrown in here to be hidden? A lot, he assumed. It was a perfect place, an estuary near a large dock and with build up sand, it was difficult to conduct police searches here and it was too polluted to have people swim in it for long periods of time, a perfect spot to kill.

...

A loud ship horn took him from his thoughts and he watched a large ship set off into the night.

He had no idea what time it was, he had left a note for Leafy incase he didn't come back before sunrise but he knew she'd still worry.

She was much too kind for him, he often thought he didn't deserve her, given what people said it was most likely the case.

Nothing would ever give back the time he lost with her but this was like being given a second chance, he was going to make sure he was the husband she deserved.

He turned around and retook the route he had taken to get here, back to the apartment and back to Leafy.

The clock on the wall said it was 4AM, he'd walked around aimlessly for two hours.

Leafy wasn't up yet, surprisingly even with all the noise of opening the door she was still asleep on the couch where he had left her.

So as not to disturb her, he lay down on the mattress she had gotten him and attempted to settle down.

She was definitely going to ask why he was on the floor when she woke up but he'd just tell her that he went to the bathroom and didn't want to wake her.

Even more lies, huh.

"I'm not very good at this am I?" he said to himself quietly.

He pulled the blanket over his head and tried to get at least some sleep.

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Chapter 11

The one thing Leafy didn't like about having a kid, was birthday parties.

Although she enjoyed talking to people she hated the parents in Grove's class and she hated making "small talk".

It always felt like the others judged her because they had never seen Grove's father, like they had some strange hatred for her because she was a "single mother"

She always felt uncomfortable, she was a lot younger than all the other parents and whenever the other father's spoke to her it always felt like they were leering at her.

Maybe that's why the mothers hated her...

Regardless, she attended them for Grove's sake, he was friends with kids and unfortunately for her Grove was very popular.

She groaned tiredly as the mother of the child's party Grove was going to texted her, reminding her once more to bring some extra sweets for the goodie bags.

"Do your own damn party prep next time bitch," she growled.

"What's up?" Firey asked from the living room.

"Just this mom asking to me to bring stuff to her kids party," she sighed.

"Weird, why isn't she doing it herself?" Firey asked confusedly.

"No idea, it doesn't even make sense these guys are rich," Leafy scoffed as she rolled her eyes.

Leafy told him about how she got no respect from the parents and how she was getting sick of being treated as lower than them, yet they didn't even know her.

"Well that sucks, why do you even go then?"

"I do it for Grove, I can't let my silly annoyances get in the way of his social life, I really hate them though ,"

"What if I went with you? Having someone there who you can talk to might help,"

Leafy thought for a moment as a smirk gradually formed on her face.

"Actually you should come, it might cause a bit of a stir if I showed up with a handsome guy, they'll flip once they find out we're married," she laughed.

"Oh, I'm handsome am I?" Firey grinned.

"Ah, hush up. Don't get big headed," she scolded jokingly.

"Hey, you said it not me," Firey said putting his hands up in mock defense.

And so a few hours later, Leafy, Firey and Grove pulled up in front of a house decorated for a child's party.

Grove hopped out of the car immediately, with Leafy and Firey walking behind.

After Grove knocked on the door, a small boy answered with a snooty looking middle-aged woman behind him, wearing far too much make-up for a kids birthday party.

"That's Rose, she's an absolute snot-faced bitch," Leafy hissed under her breath.

"Hello there Leafy, so glad you could make it!" Rose smiled as she shook her hand.

"It's so nice to be here! Thank you so much for inviting Grove," Leafy

replied sweetly.

Firey couldn't comprehend how quickly Leafy could change her behaviour to match social situations, it was like a strange power she had that he would never master.

"And who is this," Rose asked, gesturing to Firey.

Leafy noticed how Rose stood up straight, puffed her chest slightly and fixed her hair while looking Firey up and down and she felt a sick sense of satisfaction and pride.

"This is Firey, *he's my husband*,"

Leafy relished the look of disappointment that appeared in Rose's eyes, sorry bitch he was taken.

"Oh, you never told us you had a husband," Rose said curiously.

"He's been away on business recently, we've been married for over five years we just haven't had time to properly spend time recently," Leafy explained.

"Five years? That means you got married rather young doesn't it?" Rose questioned.

"Engaged at nineteen, married by twenty doesn't sound too bad to me," Leafy smiled as she held Firey's hand.

"Some people think it sounds bad but I wouldn't have done it any other way," Firey added.

"How sweet, you're so lucky Leafy. Any who, come in and meet the others," Rose beckoned as she walked into the house.

...

Most people had a similar reaction to Rose but Leafy loved the attention, she found it fun to watch the other mothers indirectly flirt with Firey then awkwardly back off once they learned he was married.

There were whispers but Leafy had expected this, of course it would look strange that she just showed up with a good-looking man but she knew the truth and she just simply didn't care.

People were actually speaking to her and not just having her in the circle out of pity, people were taking an interest in her and she relished in it.

She didn't feel like she was being looked down on, the men weren't treating her like a piece of meat and no one was calling her a whore in secret.

They were actually being respectful.

...

Firey wasn't having the best time but Leafy seemed to enjoy chatting so he could grin and bare it.

He recognised the types of people around him, big, expensive jewellery, extremely nice "casual" clothes and clearly forced laughter. As soon as he walked into that room he knew one thing...

The majority of people in this room were lying pricks.

They flaunted their wealth, spoiled their kids and hardly spoke to their partners, these people weren't happy, they just thought they were, to Firey it was like a really bad soap opera.

Overall, he didn't do much talking, he didn't think anyone was interesting enough to talk with, he just felt second hand embarrassment from the horrible "flirting" he dealt with but Leafy and Grove made things better.

Leafy sat right next to him, clutching his arm and saying really nice things about him, he felt really proud of himself and slightly superior to the other guys there, he saw them looking at Leafy and although he wanted to box their teeth in, Leafy held onto him, he was hers and hers alone.

He also found Grove really entertaining, he was babbling to everyone, running around everywhere and overall just being a fun

guy and everyone wanted to sit with him.

He came up to Firey and asked him to juggle and in return he would give him cake.

Firey did it, impressing all the kids who thought it was so cool that someone could just juggle, even Leafy applauded him as he sat back down, cake in hand.

After a while, Firey noticed that Leafy had become quiet and began observing more than talking, he thought it was strange but decided not to brinh it up.

...

"Thank you for coming you two, you were both absolutely wonderful," Rose called as Leafy and Firey walked to the car.

"Leafy, don't forget brunch is in Pebble's house next week!"

"Sure,"

Leafy strapped Grove in then got into the driver's street, slamming the door as she did so.

They drive in silence for a while, Firey occasionally glanced over at Leafy, her knuckles were white as they gripped the steering wheel and she had a scowl on her face.

"You alright Leafy, you seem... tense," Firey said uncertainly.

"I just find it stupid how everyone was actually nice to me today," she said simply.

"I thought that's what you wanted though?" Firey questioned slightly confused.

"Yeah, it is but I wanted them to respect *me*, the only reason anyone gave me any decency today was because of you," she snapped.

"What do you mean?" Firey asked genuinely not understanding.

"They only respected me because I had you AKA my husband, now that I'm no longer single, I'm normal," she complained.

"But respect is respect, it's better than it was isn't it?" Firey wondered.

"No, it isn't. I want them to respect me and I want them to see the hard work I do, I don't want respect just because I have someone else with me, it isn't real then," Leafy sighed.

"I've raised Grove by myself, I've worked so hard since you left to make sure he could have a good life, I accomplish more in a day than some of those women do in a year," she began.

"I've gotten promotion after promotion at work, I've been doing my best to teach Grove how to be kind and respectful, I've worked so hard and I've done it by myself,"

"I just want them to see how hard I try to do this right, I don't want people whispering about me, I don't want pity, I just want respect,"

Firey said nothing, looking at her sadly waiting for her to continue.

"They know nothing about you and yet somehow you've gotten for respect, it... hurts," she went on.

"It just makes me question everything I do, I want to be someone Grove can look up to, I want to know that I'm doing a good job," tears began to form in Leafy's eyes and her voice began to break.

"I-I just need to know if I'm a good mother, because right now I don't feel like one," she said as she succumbed to the emotions and cried.

Firey felt bad, he wanted to help her but he had never been very good at comforting people.

"I don't know what I'm doing, Firey, I don't..." the sentence stopped midway as the words just got caught in her throat.

Firey placed a hand on her shoulder, it was all he could do in that moment but he hated seeing her like this, she was such a happy person, tears just didn't look right on her.

For a moment there was silence until a tired voice from the back of the car said,

"I think you're good, mama"

Leafy lifted her head up, her eyes glistening with tears, caught slightly off guard but still with a sad look her face.

"You're the best mama in the world," Grove yawned.

Leafy put a hand over her mouth to stop the sobs but a flood of tears ran down her cheeks.

Firey watched her silently, something he hadn't thought was possible.

Leafy took a deep breath and composed herself, wiping her eyes and loosening her muscles.

Firey turned around to look at Grove but he saw that he was fast asleep in his car seat, the sight of his lolling head made Firey chuckle quietly, as he turned back he kissed Leafy on the cheek and in return he got a teary smile.

Nothing more was said after that and they soon arrived back home, after getting out the car Leafy picked Grove up and carried him in her arms up to the apartment.

As they stood in the elevator, she leaned against Firey tiredly.

Firey looked in the mirror of the elevator taken aback by the reflection of himself, Leafy and Grove.

They were close, the sight was strange, something he hadn't known he would ever see but it felt weirdly right, they looked like...

Well, they looked like a family, a safe, comfortable family.

He was transfixed by the sight, he didn't realise they were at their floor until Leafy walked out to open the door.

Leafy walked in and gently sat on the couch, still with Grove in her arms and she rested her head against the top of his, wordless and

quiet.

"You gonna go to bed?" Firey whispered.

Leafy didn't look at him, her attention was set on the little boy in her arms.

"Five minutes," she whispered in response.

Firey nodded as he sat down beside her and placed an arm around her, Leafy turned her head and looked him in the eyes.

"Five minutes,"
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Chapter 12

It was a pleasant evening, Firey sat on the couch reading a book he had wanted to start before he left, Leafy was scrolling on her phone on the opposite side and Grove was on the floor playing with his toys.

They had eaten dinner together, afterwards Grove "helped" Leafy to wash up but it was more so him splashing the soapy water around, but Leafy didn't mind, she found it cute.

There was no talking other than Grove giving his action figures voices and mimicking fighting scenes with them.

Firey watched intently as he was genuinely curious about what the young, green haired boy was doing.

He had never really been around young children, he was an only child and he didn't really meet anyone who had much younger siblings, as a result he wasn't good with kids.

Seeing one actually in front of him felt strange, since meeting Grove he didn't really know what to do, he couldn't treat him like an adult but he didn't want to baby him so he had kind of just kept his distance.

Grove looked up and held out a small, red mech toy to Firey and asked him if he wanted to play.

"Hey, isn't that usually my job to be the red guy?" Leafy laughed.

"Yeah, but I think Firey can do his voice better, you sometimes sound silly when you do it, mama," Grove said as a matter of factly.

"Hm, I see," Leafy replied, unimpressed.

Grove picked up a different toy, a strange Ninja-robot and he handed

it to Leafy.

"You're good at this one though," he smiled.

"Nice save,"Firey snickered.

Leafy rolled her eyes and sat on the ground with Grove, looking at Firey expectantly.

"You want me to join?" he questioned uncertainly.

Grove nodded happily, moving the mech closer to Firey.

"I dunno, I don't think I'd even know how to play," Firey laughed awkwardly.

Grove sat back sadly and sighed, he had a small frown on his face as he put the mech down.

Leafy scooted closer to Firey and pulled him down the the collar of his shirt.

"Firey, do not make my kid upset or I swear to God,"

Leafy glared at him and Firey gulped nervously as he took the mech from Grove and fell off the sofa after Leafy let go.

After they had started playing, Leafy and Firey sat beside each other, putting on silly voices and doing what Grove told them to do, currently they were pretending the toys were in a cafe but five minutes prior they had been battling for ownership of a big castle, Firey was confused but played along.

Strangely enough, Firey was actually enjoying the game. Grove had a laugh that was similar to Leafy's and he had a charm about him that made playing with a toy mech endearing.

He liked hearing Leafy laugh, he thought it was sweet how she paid attention to Grove and actually took the game seriously and the voices she gave the toys were pretty funny to him.

Grove and Leafy had a sweet relationship, it was clear that Leafy

adored him and he clearly thought she was the best mom in the world. To Firey, they were a perfect mother-son duo.

It was weird at first to Firey, seeing Leafy as a mom but as he got used to it he realised that it was perfect for her, she was kind, patient and a very loving person, the ideal type for a mom.

Deep down, a part of him felt... lonely? Left out? He couldn't put a word on it but he felt a bit sad that he didn't feel like a "dad"

He had never really given the idea much thought but he and Leafy and spoken about it once or twice, he hadn't told her but he liked the idea of it on the rare times it crossed his mind.

Recently, he had become closer with Grove, last week he had read a bedtime story with him because Leafy had fallen asleep as soon as she got home from work.

In moments when he was with Grove he would lie to himself and pretend he was a dad for a few minutes just to get rid of that empty feeling.

He couldn't explain it but he cared about Grove and playing with him and getting along with him just felt right, especially with Leafy playing too.

He may not be Grove's dad but he wanted to look after Grove and be there for him.

Firey wouldn't tell Leafy his thoughts and what he pretended but that was okay, as long as no one knew, he could keep pretending even if it made him sad.

...

The game had moved on to them battling each other, Leafy's role was to gather the other toys as re-enforcements for Grove as he fought against Firey.

Grove had Firey backed against a wall, acting out the most epic battle he could imagine, with Firey giving the mech a deep voice to sound evil.

Grove stood up as he attempted to deliver a final blow to Firey's mech, he sprang forward to make his own, blue-mech jump on Firey's head.

Firey was taken by surprise and instinctively, as Grove moved to him, he stuck his arms out and caught him.

Grove laughed gleefully as Firey slipped downwards onto his back, with Grove raised above him in his hands.

"Now I can fly!" Grove giggled, continuing his attack on Firey.

"And you're gonna go super high!" Firey laughed as he stood up, holding Grove above his head as the young child kicked his legs and cackled.

Firey was caught up in the moment, Grove's grin and laughter warmed his heart, he just felt so happy.

He lowered his arms and held Grove close and to his joy, Grove hugged him back, his face nuzzled into Firey's shoulder.

Leafy watched the scene unfold with a strange feeling.

Firey had imprinted on Grove, that was obvious and it... scared her.

But the sight of Firey being a soft, caring...

Leafy gasped softly as it clicked with her.

He looked like a dad.

She grinned like an idiot at the two, watching Firey be something she never thought he'd get the chance to be.

For now, she pushed away the fear and the other emotions she didn't want to face and allowed herself to feel happiness.

Firey put a still giggling Grove down and glanced over at Leafy who was smiling at him.

"Don't feel left out," he grinned as he walked over to her and lifted

her up off the ground.

He spun her around she kicked her legs and clung to him.

He slowed to a halt, still holding her up and gazed into her eyes before kissing her deeply.

"Ewwww," Grove exclaimed as he turned around which caused Leafy to smile affectionately at him as she pulled away from the kiss.

She rested against Firey after he put her down and they stayed there for a minute before Leafy looked at her watch and realised it was past Grove's bedtime.

She told Grove to go to the bathroom and brush his teeth, after that she went upstairs to tuck him in and make sure he fell asleep.

She came downstairs a while later in her pajamas and sat herself down beside Firey.

"You impressed me today," she said to him and she lay against his side.

"How so?" he asked.

"You were getting along with Grove and you just handled things better than I thought you would," she smiled softly.

"Yeah, I don't know it just kind of felt... natural I guess," he shrugged.

"What do you mean?" Leafy wondered.

"Like, I just did what felt right if that makes sense, I feel attached to Grove now, as stupid as that sounds," he sighed.

"I think he's attached to you too," Leafy responded.

Now the bad emotions were hitting Leafy, she was nervous, scared and worried.

She hadn't thought it would happen but Firey and Grove actually liked each other and were clearly forming a bond.

She still wasn't ready, she was still in the dark about where Firey had been or what he'd done and he was getting closer to finding...

She couldn't let it happen, not yet.

She bit her thumb as she thought about her choices.

There was no way it wasn't him and because of that, she knew he had a right to know...

Or she could try keep it to herself for as long as she could, he hadn't questioned her about it since he came back but with the way things were going, he would bring it up soon.

Would it be so bad though? Grove would have something he would need in the future and someone to talk to about things Leafy didn't know much about and he clearly liked him.

She looked up at Firey who wrapped his arm around her and smiled and she felt a pang of guilt stab at her.

She excused herself to go to the bathroom, unable to look at his kind face.

How could she be doing this to him and still act loving, as though she wasn't keeping a massive secret from him?

As she locked the door she sighed, taking out her phone and checking her contacts.

Her finger hovered over Pin's name but she decided against it after the last time she got advice from her.

She clicked on someone who she was certain would have good advice for her and would maybe help her see some sense to make the right decision.

She typed out her text and placed her phone down as she rested her head against her knees.

A few minutes later, she received a response from her silver haired friend.

Golfball, I need to talk to you, can we meet tomorrow?

Sure, come to my house though

Leafy wiped her eyes as she turned her phone off and left the bathroom.

She walked past Firey to the stairs, Firey didn't call after her but he said goodnight and left it at that.

Leafy didn't respond, she knew if she opened her mouth at all, she wouldn't be able to control what came out.
= =

Leafy's got a secret ooooohhhhh.

Hope you enjoyed this chapter!

XOXO
LeafCake

Chapter 13

Leafy walked up Golfball's driveway and knocked on the door.

Golfball answered and let Leafy in, she greeted her and ushered her into the living room where she had laid two cups of coffee on a table.

Leafy sat down across from the silver haired woman, making idle small talk as she got comfortable.

"Okay, can I cut to the chase?" Leafy asked.

"Please do," Golfball nodded.

"I'm going to be really honest with you, I'm trusting you with information that you **cannot** tell anyone under **any** circumstances," Leafy said grimly

Golfball nodded, sipping her coffee.

"Seriously GB, you have to promise you won't tell a soul," Leafy pleaded.

"I won't, don't worry," Golfball assured her.

"No, you have to promise," Leafy demanded as she leaned forward and stuck her pinky finger out.

Golfball looked at her in disbelief and slight cringe.

"Leafy, I am not doing a pinky-promise with you," she insisted.

"Please Golfball, it'll help me feel better about telling you," she wheeled.

Golfball outwardly groaned as she linked her pinky with Leafy's and said she promised not to tell anyone what Leafy said.

Leafy sat back, satisfied then her expression grew serious.

"As you know, Firey is alive and he's been living with me and by living with me, he's living with my kid," Leafy began.

"Everything is going well, he's really sweet with Grove and they get along, Firey's really been making an effort to make it up to me,"

Leafy shuffled awkwardly, trying to adjust herself in the chair.

"He's being too nice, he's been so wonderful and it feels like a blessing that I get to be with him again but I'm accepting his love while lying to him," she said sadly.

"What do you mean?" Golfball asked.

"Well, looking back now, there were signs that something was going on with Firey, things that seem obvious now," Leafy recalled.

"He was working overtime, he was tired a lot and stressed, he kept watching the news when there was talk about crime and he kept having to leave at strange times to do work assignments,"

"For a while, I thought he was cheating, especially with the weird work hours. I was anxious a lot and kept trying to be a good wife to Firey but due to the stress I would only irritate him," she sighed.

Golfball have her a slightly sympathetic look but it still felt like she wasn't entirely interested but she never was the empathetic type.

"A few days before he died, Firey suddenly became a lot calmer and more appreciative of things around him, it was probably him making the most of the time he had left with me before he had to do whatever he did," Leafy said thoughtfully.

"He became much more affectionate and three days before the crash, we... um, we, you know..." Leafy had a rather embarrassed expression on her face and Golfball pinched the bridge of her nose.

"Well, then as you know I was sick a few weeks later and I went to the doctor's to get checked out, and ta-da, I was... pregnant,"

Leafy stared at her feet, like a child who had just been caught doing something they shouldn't as Golfball finally put two and two together and gaped at her, open mouthed.

"Uh, yeah so, Firey is Grove's... father," Leafy said with fake enthusiasm.

"Oh my God, why didnt I just know?" Golfball asked herself "It's so obvious now,"

"I think it was the greif, I didn't even realise it until I was a month in," Leafy sighed.

"I decided to keep the baby , as a way of still having a bit of Firey with me and I decided I'd love them no matter what and I'd be the best parent ever, so I started working over time so I could afford a good lifestyle,"

Tears threatened to spill from Leafy's eyes and to her surprise, Golfball held her hand gently, her way of saying that she was there for her.

"But, now he's back and he might actually be able to be Grove's father but with all the leaving and the not telling me anything I just can't trust him completely but I just sound like a total hypocrite," she said.

"He doesn't know Grove is his but they just fit together, I'm just trying to figure out if I tell him or not,"

Golfball thought for a moment, taking a slow sip from her coffee before putting it down.

"Don't tell him,"

"Huh?"

"Wait a bit before saying anything, let him prove he can be trusted and that he actually *will* stay or wait for him to tell you what happened, that'll prove it to you I think,"

"What if he finds out by himself or I accidentally let it slip?"

"I'm sure he'll understand, he'll probably be ecstatic to be a dad so I doubt he'd care,"

"This is honestly a surprise to hear from you, I thought you want me to be honest,"

"Leafy, I saw what happened to you when you thought he had died, you were heartbroken, that man put you through so much and then waltzes back into your life like nothing happened? You have a very good reason to not tell him,"

"Still, it concerns him and I just feel like he has a right to know, I feel so guilty!"

"You're doing it to protect yourself and Grove, you don't want Grove to go through what you went through and I have a large respect for you for that,"

"So you really think I shouldn't say anything yet?"

"Yes, wait a bit longer just to cautious, I mean what if it turns out he really isn't dad material?"

"You're right, Grove comes first I've done well so far I think, I'm not gonna let Firey mess it all up,"

"Exactly, you're doing so well, why end here?"

"What should I do though? Do I keep acting like it's all normal?"

"Yeah, keep doing what you're doing, it seems that everyone is happy this way,"

"Hm okay, I still feel bad about it all,"

"Don't, Firey is a good guy once it's all explained he'll understand why you didn't tell him right away,"

"I hope so,"

Leafy pushed her cup away and sank in her chair while gazing out the window, with an empty, guilt-like feeling in her chest.

"I really hope so,"
= = = =

Chapter 14

Firey was alone in the apartment, it was so quiet you could hear a pin drop.

He hadn't gotten up yet and it was almost noon, if Leafy found out he had done nothing, she'd definitely have a few choice words for him.

Leafy...

He sighed happily at the thought of her, she was giving him a chance and things were working, it was all going well.

She had kissed him, she had let him get physically near her, she had broken almost all of her own rules, except one.

She still didn't let him sleep in her bed.

He wasn't exactly upset or hurt by it, but he just wanted her near him when it was dark.

He didn't like the dark and with the way he was sleeping he was on the verge of being borderline nocturnal.

He rested during the afternoon, before Leafy came home because he was terrified that if he closed his eyes in the night something would hurt him.

He hated it and he hated not being able to tell anyone, someone who didn't know what he had gone through, he would just look like a lazy bastard.

The things that had been done to him had impacted him more pthan he thought they would. Nowadays, he was tired a lot and just wanted to take things slow and steady.

He wasn't like this before, he used to always be looking for the next

thing that needed to be done or that could be done, he had fun, he just did things.

But that's what got him "killed".

His willingness to do stupidly dangerous things, his determination to see things through and his energy got him into the investigation line of work and it got him assigned the task of finishing off the biggest crime group the country had ever seen.

He didn't have much to do at first, he just went on assignments to track and dig up any info he could, all very easy.

But then he slipped up a bit and soon, the heads of the crime gang knew who he was and he was going to become a target.

He was still doing his work though, he enjoyed it.

Also his higher-ups failed to tell him he was basically a sitting duck, something he now resented them for but he had almost gotten himself fired for screwing up so badly however, the man in charge of his division defended him by arguing he was still young and deserved a proper chance.

He was 21 and already had a title as lead detective in the biggest case they had seen in years, how messed up was that?

He continued to investigate and helped bring in two of the crooks but when you cross an organised crime group, they don't retaliate kindly...

He was still a target and yet he was more involved than ever, people were hunting him and with every passing second, they got closer.

Other people were also in danger, almost everyone who did field work on the case was in danger of varying degrees and so an emergency summit was held on the other side of the country.

Firey didn't give Leafy all the details but she was busy with her college work so she hasn't exactly asked him why he was suddenly packing to stay in a random city for a week.

At the summit, tensions were high as people were demanding to be kept safe and others were demanding that the case be brought to a close because they thought the gang lords were too dangerous.

Their requests were denied and instead, planning was started on how to hide identities, an announcement that didn't really roll with everyone.

Some people were told that plastic surgery would be needed, others were told they needed to move far away, one person even having to leave the country.

Firey was okay with all this, he could either tell Leafy he was having a midlife crisis or just convince her to move house, it would have been difficult seeing as they had just bought a lovely apartment together but he'd find a way.

It was all simple to him, but fate has a tendency of being a little bitch.

As the summit came to a close, Firey was called to talk to The Director in private and he was finally told how dire his situation was.

He was basically a dead man walking, there were eyes on him almost everywhere, he wasn't even safe walking down an empty street.

In order to keep him and everyone he loves safe, he needed to die.

Firey, being the idiot that he is thought he was about to be shot so as a means of trying to escape, he knocked a security guard unconscious and attempted to jump out a window.

Thankfully, he was grabbed by the other guards and after a few minutes he was eventually calmed down and told what needed to happen.

His death was going to be faked, it would be a car crash and members of the agency would be involved so that official documents could be faked and his body could be examined and declared dead without anyone saying otherwise.

He was going to be buried without anyone even getting a glimpse of

his body.

He was very much against this and began yelling at The Director and his advisors.

He screamed at them, calling them cowards and asking how the hell he would be able to go back to his normal life once the case was sorted.

He had to be restrained, he was getting ready for a fight, he was scared, terrified even.

He was being told to leave everything he loved behind for an unknown amount of time or die, to him there was no difference.

Leafy would cry, there was no doubt and he couldn't stand the fact it was his fault.

It was his fault for joining the agency, it was his fault for being a stupid loudmouth who took on cases he knew nothing about and now he was paying the price.

After he reluctantly agreed, his death was set in motion.

A hyper realistic dummy of him was created, with fake organs and blood to make it believeable, it unnerved him to no end.

He was taught how to roll out of a moving car and practice runs were done so he would know what van to hide under when it all went down.

He had to work overtime to look at past info he had gathered and to practice dying, he was stressed and everything made him snap.

The day before it all happened, he was followed home by a man in a suit. He knew he didn't have much time before they made an attempt on his life or someone he was close with.

He needed to keep Leafy safe, if he had to die for that he could live with it.

He had no idea how long it would all last, he had been informed that

there was a chance it wouldn't be over for years and he'd spend a large chunk of his life as a dead man.

He had to come to terms with the fact that his normal life would change, Leafy might find someone new and she might just fall out of love with him.

He hated that and he hated he had to accept it.

During his final days alive, he spent as much time with Leafy as he could but avoided any talk about the future in case he was talking about a future he wouldn't have.

Suddenly, them getting married at nineteen didn't seem so bad, he had gotten to marry her at least.

He loved her, leaving her was what hurt the most but he knew he had to, for her sake.

He made sure that she knew he loved her and did everything he could to ensure that she would have good memories of him.

As she lay in his arms, her bare skin cold against his, they didn't say a word he just wanted to engrave her touch into his mind and his very soul, he just wanted her, as a part of him, as a reason to keep going.

He memorised her smell, her feel, her sound, all of it being burned into his mind as he intended.

"Leafy, I love you, please don't forget that," were the final words he said to her as he left their apartment for seemingly the last time.

And it happened, it all went to plan and he was taken away in an ambulance then just outside the city boarders he was quikcly shoved into a government vehicle and taken to the agencies headquarters in the capital.

From that day on, the case and the investigation became his life, it became everything he knew.

He became a different person in those five years.

He had wittnessed people kill and pushed to his limit, he killed.

He had blood on his hands and they would never be clean.

During that time, he avoided mirrors because he couldn't stant that person that stared back at him, a person who he didn't know, with a cigarette in their mouth, sleepy eyes and messy hair, it disgusted him.

...

He hated thinking about those days, they made him feel sick, they made him feel... hatred.

Hatred for himself, hatred for the people who put him into that situation, hatred for the people who profited off his pain.

Some days it was easy to pretend it didn't happen but most of the time, faces of people, the smell of rooms and the images of events replayed in his head and he had to wait for them to stop.

Sometimes he cried, only when he was alone and never out loud, it was more his eyes watering and tears falling, it was the only way to express that side of his emotions.

He pulled the blanket over his head to block out the brightness of the sun and soon found himself growing drowsy.

His eyes felt heavy and the warmth of the blanket along with it's pleasant smell soothed him, it gave him a comfortable feeling that he relished.

Slowly, he drifted to sleep with the gentle rays of the sun warming him further and he was out like a light.

Safe and sound.

= = = =

LeafCake

Chapter 15

Leafy was on her break and she had decided to walk to the wonderful café near the office complex to get a freshly brewed latter instead of the watery, stale coffees that came from the staff room coffee maker, that thing had to be a health violation she swears.

The café wasn't far and it was definitely worth losing a bit of the time she had.

The lovely smell hit her as she walked in, warm pastries and expensive coffee beans combines to create an almost intoxicating aroma that made her almost salivate.

The workers were friendly and it seemed that the customers were too, no one was yelling, no one was demanding service, everyone was simply going about their day and smiling while they did it, this was what Leafy loved, happy people, in happy places.

She hadn't told anyone about this place, she wanted it for herself, somewhere she could go and forget her life for a bit and just be chill.

It was her small secret that she would never, ever tell.

The barista at the counter greeted her as they always did, the workers had gotten to know her and they always knew what she would order.

As a matter of fact, her order always seemed to come a bit quicker than the others, she liked to imagine that they began preparing it as soon as she walked in.

She collected her drink, left a decent tip and sat down at her favourite table, a small sofa off in the corner, not too far from a window.

She sighed happily as she relished the smooth taste of the warm latte

and closed her eyes for a moment.

She was so relaxed.

"Pardon me, is this seat taken?"

Leafy jumped in surprise and brought her attention to the person in front of her.

They had dark green hair that seemed neat and messy at the same time, bright green eyes and a sweet yet sinister smile that showed his too white teeth.

They wore an expensive looking suit with a crisp white shirt with a green tie, they looked like a stereotypical business shark, he was trying to come off friendly but there was something... off putting about his demeanor.

"No, it isn't,"

"May I?" they asked gesturing to the chair.

"Sure,"

They sat down with a form of "elegance" and Leafy watched them suspiciously.

"So, do you need something?" she questioned.

"As a matter of fact no, but I think you do," they smiled.

"What do I need?" she said with slight venom.

"Temper, temper, don't worry I have no ill intent, I am merely a... well let's say I'm a well-wisher," they said sweetly.

"Ill intent or not, I don't know you and you've approached me in a random café, no well-wisher does that," she stated.

"Ah, forgive me, I didn't take your reaction into account, it's very much justified," they said calmly

"My name is Two, I won't bore you with my life story but what you

must know is that I am a very influential person and I have information that may be of interest to you, my dear,"

Leafy narrowed her eyes at the man, remaining wordless but making sure he knew how she felt.

"I understand your hesitation, I would behave the same way if I was in your position but do take a listen to what I have to say,"

"Alright then, but I will remind you we are in a very public place and I would feel zero embarrassment in causing a scene," Leafy warned.

She didn't really want to talk to this stranger but she was curious, he seemed like a well-off person, with fancy mannerisms and a nice English accent that really topped it all off, they were like a travelling magician, a person who drew you in no matter what.

"Would you happen to know a man named, Firey?"

"Why?" Leafy asked, very serious now.

"He was gone for a while wasn't he?"

Leafy felt her stomach lurch as she gave the person a hard stare, searching for some kind of hint as to who he was.

"What has he told you about his time away?"

Her breath caught in her throat, her mouth slightly open as she tried to get at least some kind of coherent word out.

Their sharp green eyes and wide smile, bore into her,making her feel like a deer about to be shot by a hunter with no form of escape.

"That's what I thought, you poor thing,"

"I-I dont-I-" try as she might the fear was overtaking her and she couldn't function.

"Have you asked him about it?"

Leafy nodded in response.

"Do you really want to know where he went and what he did?"

Once again, she nodded this time with more control.

"I can tell you what you want to know, it may prove to be *insightful,*"

They crossed their legs and continued to smile at Leafy, seemingly unaware of how terrified she was.

"So, shall I begin?"

Here it was, the answer to her questions, she could finally find out why he left and what he did when he left.

It was so close, so easy...

Just a simple "yes" and there was chance she could know everything, if this person was telling the truth, her life could be a lot more trustful.

She wanted to say yes so badly, she wanted to know everything, she wanted to find out.

...

Then, she remembered his face, his smile, his warmth, his love.

Deep down, she knew that agreeing would be like betraying him, deep down, she suspected he wanted to tell her himself but he simply couldn't.

After everything, she just couldn't do that to him, she was hurting him enough as it was, even if he didn't know it.

"No thank you,"

Two maintained the joyful expression on their face , unnerving Leafy, causing her to shift uncomfortably.

"Perfectly reasonable, I admire your loyalty," Two shrugged.

"However, I will offer you this," Two said as they suddenly brandished a small card and handed it to Leafy.

"This is my business card, just call the number on it and we can organise something,"

Leafy glared slightly as she reluctantly took the card and held it in her lap.

"A kind offer but I doubt I'll take you up on it," she said primly.

"No one is telling you to, it's merely to keep your options open," Two chuckled slightly.

The insufferable smile was still glued to their face but something was... dark about their visage, almost sinister.

"You are completely blind to that man's past, completely unaware of what he has done, or what has been done to him,"

"What do you mean?"

"I don't *mean* anything, I am simply suggesting that you be wary of events around you,"

"A sound piece of advice but I will live my life how I want to, hopefully avoiding people like you," she snapped, suddenly rather angry.

"You have some nerve to act like you can give any input on my choices, I m dealing with things the way I want to deal with them and I **do not** need some sneaky idiot to dictate my issues to me,"

Leafy was pissed, she wasn't even sure why but what she did know what that this asshole's smile pissed her off and she didn't want to suffer his cocky attitude any longer.

She stood up quickly, grabbed her coffee and her bag and stormed out of the café, leaving the strange scene behind.

As she walked back to her office, she did her best to calm herself to avoid snapping at people.

Overall, she was proud of herself, she stayed true to herself and she liked to think that she stood her ground while remaining loyal to her

husband.

She wondered how Two reacted to her leaving so quickly, she hadn't seen their face, maybe she wiped the smirk off, it was clear they were used to convincing people to do what they wanted so maybe she surprised them a bit.

They definitely loved themself a bit too much and probably had people bending over backwards to please them, the bastard probably walked all over people.

She took the card from her pocket and stared at it, examing all of its details.

It was a sleek, professional card that didn't look cheap at all, the phone number on the back was pressed into it, like a credit card number.

It felt like she was holding something she shouldn't be, something that wasn't supposed to be held by her, it gave her a bad feeling.

She shouldn't keep it, she knew damn well but the idea that it was there... she just couldn't explain it but she couldn't bring herself to throw it away.

She would never use it but she would keep it somewhere safe.

In a box she had hidden that contained things that were precious to her, things she held close, she would put it there tonight.

Right beside Firey's wedding ring, the only thing she had gotten from the medics after the crash.

The thing is, he hadn't even asked her where it was.

...

"How did it go?"

"She took the card, but was adamant about not wanting to hear anything from me,"

"Are you gonna keep going after her?"

"No need, that card is all we require to keep eyes on her,"

Two was sat in an expensive car, beside a silver haired man who looked like he needed a good night's sleep.

"As much as I respect you Two, do we really need to drag her into all this? I mean she seems nice enough and she's clearly been put through a lot because of all this already,"

"Does it seem like I care? Besides, it's necessary, this has become very important to me, she is the perfect thing to use to get to him, he's crazy about her,"

"But she's done nothing to you, are you really going to hurt her?"

"Oh Nickel , you still don't understand how the world works," Two laughed pitifully.

"I want that man to pay for what he's done, in this world, it's all about give and take,"

The smile faded from Two's face, leaving a dark, eerie frown in its place.

"And that bastard has taken too much from me,"

Nickel gave Two a confused look, sighed and went back to looking out the window.

"Whatever you say, man,"
= = = =

Except Woody, he died cus fuck him.

Hope you enjoyed the chapter!

XOXO
LeafCake

Chapter 16

Leafy was stressed, work was piling up, Grove was running around like a madman and there was just too much to do.

She sat at her table with a large mug of coffee, praying that today would be even slightly easy.

Grove was running around the apartment, frantically trying to find his sketchbook and causing chaos that was too much for 7am.

He ran around the corner, bumping into Firey who walked out of the bathroom, not at all startled by the small child who just ran into him and he picked him up, stopping him in his tracks.

"Hey, what are you doing?" Firey laughed.

"Getting ready," Grove said, kicking his legs in the air.

Firey carried Grove into the living room with him slumped over one shoulder like a big sack.

"Morning, Leafs!" Firey greeted.

Leafy glared at Firey, too tired to play along.

"Firey, put my kid down before you break him," she said as she pinched the bridge of her nose.

"Aww, no!" Grove complained as his feet touched the ground.

Firey walked over to Leafy, giving her a quick kiss on her head before getting himself a coffee.

"You alright Leafy? You seem uh, not in the best of moods," Firey chose his words carefully.

"No, I'm clearly not fine! I have meeting today after work, a crapton of paperwork to do when it's over and Grove's school keeps emailing me about things that don't need to be emailed," she complained, laying her face on the table.

"Oh, sounds like a fun time, anyway I can help?" Firey asked.

Leafy raised her head, looking at him thoughtfully and figured she could use the extra help.

"Yeah actually, do you think you could pick Grove up from school today and just look after him and make some dinner?" she asked.

"Of course, no worries, I'm on it!" Firey agreed happily, giving her a thumbs up.

Leafy smiled fondly at him as he told Grove he was going to pick him up today and they high fived.

Soon, she gathered her things and left the apartment with Grove as Firey waved goodbye to them from the balcony.

Firey stood alone in the apartment, trying to figure out where he should start. He figured he should put things away, dust then polish and clean things.

He took out the vaccume cleaner and duster and set to work, making sure to do a thorough job and humming songs to himself.

Once that job was done, he took out the polish and set about polishing the shelves and other surfaces.

He crouched down to go over the DVD case and had a moment of realisation.

Leafy was out at work and here he was... cleaning.

Oh my god, he was a house husband.

He had always said he would never become one of those, he wanted to be out doing things.

But now he was here, kneeling on the floor with a tea-towel wrapped around his waist, he found that he was, well he was enjoying it.

It felt strangely relaxing not having something major looming over him, he liked the simplicity of it all and how reassuringly safe it felt.

He wasn't doing anything he didn't want to do, he was just making his and hopefully Leafy's life a little bit easier.

He continued to clean with full effort and it was around eleven thirty when he got a call from Leafy.

"Hey, what's up?" he asked.

"Sorry it's such short notice but Grove's school closed early due to a powercut, do you think you could pick him up in the next thirty minutes?" she said, still clearly stressed.

"Yep, sounds possible but I'll have to take the subway, is that alright?" he questioned.

"Yeah, it's all good, just keep an eye on him and make sure he eats," Leafy instructed.

"I got it, he'll be fine, you just try get through your day with one less thing to worry about," Firey reassured.

"Thank you Firey, it really means a lot," she sighed with relief.

"If there's something I can do that'll help, I'll do it," Firey boasted.

"I know and I'm very thankful. I have to go now but bye, I love you!" Leafy said sweetly before hanging up.

"Love you too!"

Leafy put her phone down and glanced at Gelatin who rolled his eyes and sighed in mock disappointment.

"Don't you dare say a thing!" Leafy hissed.

Gelatin put his hands up in defense and simply drank his tea without

a word.

...

Firey walked down the street that Grove's school was on, it was pretty with trees lining both sides with gaps on sunlight falling through the leaves.

The gates of the school were tall and rather intimidating for a preschool but thankfully they were open so he didn't have to embarrass himself by trying to open them.

There were lots of parents walking in and out of the gate with their children, all of them seemed to be well off families and Firey felt a bit out of place.

He was by far the youngest adult there and he sure as hell wasn't dressed like one of the dads there who wore suits and ties, he looked like a stupid teenager in comparison.

He stood around for a while, unsure of what to do. He thought that the kids would have been waiting outside like they usually would at the end of the day but he saw that the parents were walking into the building and walking out with their kids.

People were beginning to give him strange looks so he quickly made his way into the building, not taking into account that he didn't know where Grove's classroom was.

After walking down the same corridor a few times he gave up and went to the secretary's office to see if they would know where Grove was.

The secretary was a sweet, middle-aged lady and her name tag read, Tea-Kettle.

She asked Firey who he was and he explained that he was picking Grove up for Leafy, telling Tea Kettle she could call Leafy if she wanted proof but she said it was fine and told him where he could find Grove's room.

At last he found it and he walked in to see Grove playing with some

trucks alongside a few other children and his face lit up when he spotted Firey.

He quickly sprang up, grabbed his bag and ran to Firey, greeting him with a high-five.

Grove held Firey's hand as they left and when the green haired child found out he was going to ride the train today he was ecstatic.

He pointed out random things to Firey, telling him how they worked and how long they had been there.

"That's a water tower, it's been there for a bazillion years!"

"Woah really, how do you think it got there?"

"I dunno,"

Firey found it entertaining to talk to Grove the same way he would to anyone his age, it made for some fun conversations.

At the train station, Grove wanted to hold his train ticket and he felt like a very important little guy.

They stood on the platform waiting for the train to arrive, with Grove asking when the train would be there over and over again.

Firey was relieved when the train pulled in because he was starting to feel a headache, as much he liked Grove he could only hear the same question so many times.

Grove sat by the window, his face against the glass admiring the city.

He begged Firey to play a game of Eye-Spy, unfortunately Firey was feeling rather drowsy and that was the last thing he wanted to do but he agreed, coming with difficult things that Grove would never guess in a million years so he could rest his eyes a bit.

It wasn't a long ride home and Firey only had to suffer through a few games before they got to their stop.

Grove still had a lot of energy, running ahead of Firey every so often

to play with or rather, scare the birds on the footpath.

Firey took out his phone, texted Leafy that they were almost home and looked up just in time to see Grove fall face first onto the ground, raise his head up to reveal a large, red mark on his forehead and Firey knew it was going to he a nasty bruise.

"Shit," he said under his breath as he went to help Grove.

Grove began to cry and placed his hands against his forehead as Firey lifted him to his feet.

"Hey, it's alright just a little bruise, we all get them," Firey tried to reassure him.

"It hurts," Grove sniffled.

"Yeah, I'd say it does but it's okay, I'll make it better," Firey smiled softly.

Grove looked at him with sad eyes as Firey pulled his hands away so he could get a look at the damage.

"You're being brave Grove, your mama would be proud of you," Firey said pushing Grove's hair back.

"I'm brave like her," he nodded.

They weren't far from the apartment, Firey picked Grove up and carried him on his shoulders the rest of the way, cheering Grove up immensely.

Once the got there, Firey took a pack of frozen peas from the freezer and held it against the bruise to reduce the swelling.

"Ack, it's cold!" Grove complained, pushing the pack away.

"Yeah but that's what helps you get better, now you wont have a bump on your head," Firey explained.

Grove winced as Firey held the frozen bag in place, still sniffling.

"It hurts," Grove winced.

"Then we take it off and put it back on in a few minutes," Firey said with a smile.

Grove nodded as Firey lifted him from the counter where he sat and walked to the couch, grabbing his blanket and covering himself with it.

Firey smiled at him, ruffling his hair gently and sitting beside him.

Grove began playing with his action figures and Firey went into the kitchen to get him some food, he chopped up some fruit and put some leftover chicken into a slice of bread and brought it out to him.

Grove leaned against Firey, eating and offering some as he did so, the pair sat together watching a documentary about the city's train and transportation industry.

"You're a good guy now," Grove piped up.

"Wasn't I always a good guy?" Firey questioned.

"No, you were gonna steal my dinosaurs, mama said so," Grove said.

"Drat, foiled again!" Firey said in an "evil" voice.

"No! They're my Dinos!" Grove exclaimed, slightly worried.

"Just a joke, don't worry," Firey laughed.

Grove stuck his tongue out at Firey then grinned at him.

...

Leafy got home later than she had expected, she hoped Firey was able to look after Grove, putting him to bed and getting him to eat could sometimes be tough.

Just to be on the safe side, she entered the apartment quietly in case Grove was asleep, she walked silently into the living room and stopped when she saw the sight in front of her.

Grove was fast asleep, curled up in a ball with his blanket half covering him, with his head resting on Firey's lap and his hand holding onto Firey's shirt sleeve.

Firey was sitting upright but his head was pointed downwards and his arm loosely around Grove's shoulders, he was also asleep, snoring slightly.

Leafy smiled, wider than she had in a long time at her two favourite people in the world.

She walked over to Firey, placing a kiss on his head, smiling lovingly at him.

Firey woke up slightly to see Leafy in front of him and he gave her a tired smirk.

"Hey," he said lazily.

"Hey yourself," Leafy laughed in a low tone before kissing him goodnight.

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Chapter 17

Leafy tossed and turned but she couldn't block out the howling wind or the heavy rain that bashed her windows.

She hated storms, especially at night. She didn't mind light rain during the day but storms were just too loud and got in the way of things, some people found them soothing but for her they were just annoying and she hated to admit it but rather scary.

CRASH.

Leafy jumped in fright as the loud sound caught her off guard and she winced as she realised she would now have to deal with thunder on top of everything else.

She buried her head in her pillow in an attempt to block it out but the storm was close and it was a fruitless effort.

She just wanted to sleep, she was so tired but her body just wouldn't let her, her head ached and she was cold, it was like some horrid presence above decided that she shouldn't be allowed to sleep peacefully.

Her eyes watered and she began to cry ever so slightly, not because she was sad but because she felt it was an appropriate time to be a little dramatic.

She sighed deeply as she gave up and curled into the fetal position, trying to ignore everything around her.

...

"Hey, you okay?"

Leafy turned to see Firey standing in the doorway, looking just as

tired as her, wearing a red sports jersey and black basketball shorts, he had clearly been in bed himself.

"Yeah, I'm fine just trying to sleep," she said as she adjusted herself to an upright position.

"Is the thunder keeping you up?" he asked.

"Well yeah, but I can deal with it, it's all good," she shrugged.

"You still scared of it?" he smiled.

"Oh, you remember that," she said, slightly embarrassed.

"Of course I do, I didn't just forget everything while I was gone," he scoffed.

Firey walked in and sat at the foot of the bed, not going anywhere near Leafy.

"I remember, a week after our wedding there was a really bad thunderstorm and you just clung to me for the whole night," he laughed quietly.

"Oh, I forgot that," Leafy said sheepishly.

"Don't worry, what I'm trying to say is I'll do it again, I'll sit here and talk to you, to try distract you from it," he offered.

"Really, I think that might help actually," she said thoughtfully.

"I'll stay as long as you want me to, okay?"

"Thank you, Firey,"

For the next while, the two sat together talking about anything that came to mind, people, events, stupid stories, anything and everything and soon the storm began to ease up.

Leafy would hopefully be able to fall asleep now that the thunder was gone, Firey wished her goodnight and got up to leave.

But, she didn't want him to leave, he hadn't been in this room for

almost five years and having him in it again felt nice, she wanted him to stay.

"Firey, wait," she called to him.

"Hm?" Firey stopped just outside the door, listening.

"I want you to sleep with me,"

She knew it came out wrong the moment she said it.

Extremely embarrassed, she smacked her hand over her mouth as she began to blush profusely.

Firey was just as shocked as her, with a very confused expression on his face.

"No, no, no! That is not what I meant by that!" she exclaimed.

"W-what I meant was that, I want you to sleep *beside* me, nothing else," she explained awkwardly.

Firey snickered at her, folding his arms over his chest as she glared at him.

"Oh my god, you're so pretty but so clueless sometimes," he laughed.

"Hm, maybe I don't want you here tonight," she huffed, turning away.

"No, I'm sorry, I was just being tired and stupid," he defended, still laughing slightly.

"Aren't you always?" she replied primly.

"Hey, that's just mean!" he accused.

"Oh calm down and get in," she said as she rolled her eyes and scooted over to make room for him in the bed.

"You sure?" he asked, uncertainly.

"Yep, that's where you used to sleep and you paid for the bed so it's technically yours," she shrugged.

Firey settled under the sheet, feeling a sense of familiarity wash over him as he nestled into the comfortable mattress.

This was his spot, the left-side of the bed that used to be apart of his everyday life felt so rare and special to him now but it was just as lovely as he remembered it.

He was comfortable, he was warm, he was safe, he hadn't felt these things in a bed in years.

Another pleasant surprise was that he found himself falling asleep without much difficulty, it was two in the morning and maybe that added to it but he liked to think it was being in a nice space is what did it.

His thoughts were interrupted when Leafy rolled over to him, snuggling herself into his chest.

"Warm," she sighed happily.

Firey rested his chin on her head, feeling Leafy latch onto him like a koala, history repeats itself.

"How are you now?" Firey asked.

"Still a but spooked but I'll live,"she shrugged.

"Yeah, it'll be alright now," he nodded.

"To be honest, it's embarrassing being scared of storms, I never thought I'd outright admit it," she confessed.

"You shouldn't be embarrassed by things like that, it's a reasonable fear I think,"

"But it just feels silly, you know? Like I'm a mom, I can't be scared of things like this,"

"But it's totally normal, like I'm-" he cut himself off, thinking of his next words. "I'm scared of the dark, actually,"

Leafy was surprised by this, she couldn't lie, as far as she knew all

that Firey was scared of was water, she never knew the dark bothered him.

"I didn't know that, how long have you been afraid?" she asked.

"Ah, it started while I was gone," he sighed.

"What happened?" she questioned.

"You know I can't say anything, Leafy," he said.

Leafy looked hurt but didn't pressure further.

"Okay, all I can say is bad things happened, there was a lot of darkness and I never saw what was coming at me," he said in an emotionless tone.

"I was scared, no, I was terrified. I never knew what would happen and there was nothing I could do to stop it,"

"Oh, Firey," she whispered, gazing sadly at him.

"I don't like closing my eyes, that's why I don't sleep," he stated.

"Why didn't you tell me you weren't sleeping? I would have tried to help," she insisted.

"I was embarrassed, I didn't know what you'd say, I mean, it's being scared of thunder makes sense, loud noises can scare anyone but for a grown adult to be scared of the dark, it's just weird," Firey shrugged.

"No it's not, bad things happened in the dark and now your mind doesn't like it, it's perfectly valid," Leafy said.

Firey remained silent, thinking about what she was saying.

"I think it's fine to be scared of the dark and besides you said its okay for me to scared of thunder so it should be okay for you to be scared of the dark," Leafy smiled.

"You said, you'd comfort me when I was scared and I can do the same for you," she said, pulling him closer so they were face to face.

Firey looked into her eyes, endulging in the gorgeous mix of greens and hints of yellow, like the canopy of a forest when the sunlight shone through.

They stayed like that, in a blissful silence, staring at each other, Leafy kept a soft smile on her face as she ran her fingers through Firey's hair, trying to figure him out.

What had he seen? What had been done to him and what had he done?

She hated not knowing, she hated being left in ignorance by someone who was supposed to trust her but she knew that all she could do was go along with it.

He was hurt and memories of hurt don't go away just like that, despite her underlying distrust that had been brewing since his return, she still loved him, though it wasn't ideal.

She sighed as she watched his peaceful face grow tired once again and begin falling back into the clutches of sleep.

She was a bad person, messing with the emotions of a scarred man.

...

"You can sleep here from now on, if you want,"

The flame haired man opened his eyes slightly, searching for any signs of joking from the woman in front of him before she rolled into her side.

"Really?"

"Yeah,"

He reached out and held her close, Leafy could feel the smile on his face and although she wanted to do the same, she remained turned away from him, unable to look him in the eyes, all she did was hold his hand lightly.

And just like that, all of her rules had been broken, rules she had set

to protect herself.

All of them were gone and she felt a horrible pit-like feeling in her stomach.

"Please don't make me regret it," she whispered silently.
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Chapter 18

TW FOR DARK THOUGHTS (ending of life thoughts) and description of death
= = = =

his face as he yawned and his legs kicked as he stretched while his eyes opened and he looked up to his mother.

She laughed softly at his squishiness and placed a hand on his cheek.

"Are you waking up now, darling?" she smiled lovingly.

Almost like a response, he put his hand against hers, trying to hold onto it despite his gloves.

His eyes were fixed on the woman holding him, like he was transfixed with her.

Leafy had no idea she could love something so much after everything that happened, this baby had her heart and he had only been out in the world for three months.

She carefully picked him up, supporting his neck as she lifted him so their eyes were on the same level and she stood up and walked with him over to a photo on the wall.

She held him in front of it and his hand that didn't cling to the woman reached out to touch the photo, unfortunately, he was just out of reach.

"Do you know who that is?" she asked him, obviously not getting a response but she enjoyed talking to him.

"It's mama, do you know who the other person is?"

The baby blew a raspberry and sighed.

"That's your papa and mama loves him very much,"

"He was a good person and he made mama feel very special and very loved and mama misses him very much,"

Her eyes began to water as she looked at the photo.

It was their wedding, both of them barely twenty years old but beyond happy in their choice.

They weren't even looking at the camera, they were only looking at each other with an unfathomable amount of love that was so obvious to anyone who saw them.

She let herself cry a bit as she recalled how lovely that day had been, it wasn't a big wedding but it was perfect for them.

It still didn't feel real that he wasn't here anymore, he wasn't just out at work, he would never come home again, she'd never see him or hold him and it broke her heart.

Blinking back her tears, she told the child more about his father, how silly he could be, how loving he was and how much he meant to her.

"He probably would have been a good dad, I'm sorry you never got the chance to meet him," she sighed sadly.

She held her baby close, giving the photo a quick kiss and she moved the baby's hand so it was like he waved at it.

"I hope you know how much I love you, Grove," she said as she looked down at the drowsy baby.

"And I hope you know he would have loved you too,"

...

Oh, how cruel existence can play horrible tricks on those within it, that a man can be on the other side of the country, labeled dead and completely unaware his son had been born three months prior.

The flame haired man woke up, feeling horrible inside a gas station bathroom.

It hadn't been his most ideal place to sleep but he was doing his best to stay below the radar and that meant not checking into any kind of hotel.

But it was getting pretty ridiculous, in the past few months, he had slept in bathrooms, random cars, ditches and under bridges.

He groaned in disgust as his hand brushed against a a strange, green

puddle and he kicked the stall door open.

Walking out he scrutinised his messy reflection in the dirty, mould covered mirror.

He was a wreck, his hair spiked up awkwardly, his clothes were covered in unknown stains and had a hole in one jacket sleeve, there were bruises on his face and his eyes looked dull and tired, the cigarette he lit was really just the cherry on top.

He didn't know who he was staring at in the mirror, surely that wasn't him.

He was cold, hungry and fed up, he wanted to go home.

Could he ever go home? Would he be able to face his wife again?

He left the bathroom thinking about the last twelve months of his life, figuring out if he could ever return to any kind of "normal" life.

As he walked down the vast, empty road he looked at his hands, holding them out and examining them.

These hands had killed someone less than forty-eight hours ago.

There was one less person in the world, because of him.

Someone would cry, because of him.

What shocked him the most wasn't the fact he had killed someone, everyone could be driven to kill if they were pushed enough, he thought.

What scared him was how little guilt he felt.

He had assumed it would eat at him until he broke but it didn't, he felt totally normal.

Well, as normal as someone in his situation could be...

He had simply killed the man because he had been told to, he had been told he was in the way of the missions progress and he choked

him until the life drained from his eyes.

He was a drug rat for cartel they were taking down and he had given away their coordinates so he had to die.

Something had been triggered in Firey's brain when the idiot ended the phone call he had overheard him make.

From the ear piece Firey had, The Director told him that phone call would set them back about three months and Firey just felt everything around him go blurry.

The Director told him if he wanted to get home sooner rather than later, he needed to get rid of the rat.

Terrifyingly void of emotion, he rushed the guy, pinning him down and looking him dead in the eyes as he tightened his grip around his throat, his pleading to be let go becoming more gargled and incoherent as Firey applied more pressure.

Firey watched until he was certain he was dead, shooting him once in the chest for good measure and burying the body out in the nearby desert just to be on the safe side.

He felt nothing.

Anything that stood in his way of getting back to the woman he loved needed to go, he didn't care who it was.

But there was a pit like feeling, like a void in his chest, maybe he was human after all.

As he continued to walk for God know how long and after he some time, he came across a bridge that cars drove on to get over a river that was far below.

The sun was beginning to set, there was no one around, Firey placed a hand on the railing, staring down at the unnervingly deep, rushing river.

There were rocks too, big, sharp ones that promised death at the moment of impact.

Firey stared at the drop, his knuckles becoming white with the intensity of his grip.

One single movement was all it would take...

One little leg up and it would all be over.

Was he meant to walk on this bridge? Was this a sign?

What if this whole thing didn't work? What if he was just going to run in circles his whole life from everything that was out to get him?

What if it never ended?

He hadn't been promised that he would be able to go home, he had killed a man at the mere possibility of it.

What was the point of continuing if all it meant was pain for everyone involved.

He was already dead as far as Leafy knew, she would never know.

Nothing felt real anymore, it all felt horribly wrong and the drop looked so inviting...

He leaned over the rail, feeling the rush of wind that blew from below, it was sharp and cold, almost like a slap.

His eyes widened as he realised what he was doing and he launched himself backwards, falling onto his back on the concrete road.

...

He lay there for a while in shock of what his mind had gone to at the mere idea of death, a real one.

He struggled to breath, winded from his fall, his head was foggy, so much so that he almost didn't hear the car that was driving toward him.

He quickly pushed himself off the ground, sitting against the bridge wall and watching the car speed past.

Shakily, he took out his phone and called the only person he could talk to.

"Hey, X ?"

"Hello Firey, how are you?" he heard his department head's cheerful voice ask.

"I-I'm fine, I just had a question,"

"Go ahead!" they chirped.

"What are we doing? What's the point of all this if we have no guarantee that it'll end? What's the end goal?" he blurted.

"We are working to prevent this from getting worse, I promise you it will be worth it, the goal is to make things safer for civilians,"X stated.

"But what about everyone else involved? People are dying X, no matter who they are why do we have a right to kill them while we get to live?"

"None of us have a right to live but they chose the path they were on just like you and I have, I don't like it but I chose this job and I've had to learn to be mature,"

"This is too much X, I want to go home, I want to see my wife, I don't want this anymore"

"Firey, are you okay?"

Firey took a deep breath, still shaking as his eyes grew blurry with tears.

"No..."

From his desk in the office X operated from, he listened to Firey break down, dropping his phone as his crying turned into sobs and he heard him fall to the ground.

"Please X... please I want to go home... I wasn't made for this,"

X felt bad for the young man, the youngest person the organisation had ever employed.

After Firey's little slip up, X had fought for him to be able to remain in his position and it had worked, maybe even too well.

Firey was in charge of things, possibly a cruel joke by the other people in charge since he was already on the gang's radar.

Firey was so young for this line of work, it was all a bit much.

Hearing Firey's anguished sobs as he repeated the phrase "I'm sorry, please just make it stop," X felt his heart break for the man.

He had thrown his life away...

Actually no, his life had been taken from him, everything he knew or loved was far behind him because of this mission with to assurance of returning to what was once his norm.

" Firey, where are you?" X questioned.

"On a bridge," Firey said simply.

"Okay, why don't you walk to a safe spot, I'll get your location and I'll send a car out to you and we'll set you up somewhere comfortable so you can rest, alright?" X said kindly.

"Yes... thank you," Firey sighed, still scared and trembling.

X talked to him as he walked to the other side of the bridge, ensuring he he was safe and didn't turn back around, only hanging up once Firey was a good distance away.

Firey sat on a rock watching the sunset over the eerily calm desert.

What would Leafy think if she saw him now?
= = = =

Howver i hope you liked it.

Chapter 19

It was a normal day for Firey, it had been a week since he had been allowed sleep in Leafy's bed and he still loved seeing her when he woke up.

Leafy had left for work and had taken Grove to school and as usual, he was alone in the apartment.

At around noon, he got a call on the phone that he kept hidden, only certain people knew that number and whenever it rang it was never something good.

He sighed in frustration as he answered the call and his day was made slightly worse when he heard the Directors voice.

"What's going on, Four?"

For a moment, there was silence on the other end until he heard Four take a shakey breath.

"It isn't good Firey,"

Immediately, Firey knew they were serious, their voice lacked the usual shrill, demanding tone it usually had and they weren't barking orders at him.

"Four, what is going on?" he asked, slightly worried.

Once more, he heard his Director take a breath, seemingly trying to compose themself.

"X has been... he was... they somehow tracked them," Four began to lose any kind of composure they had.

"Four, what happened, where is X?" Firey asked cautiously.

"They're dead, I found them this morning, their blood was still warm," Four said with no emotion.

"What... no," Firey began to remember the sweet smile the yellow haired person always wore, their happy, cheerful attitude despite everything around them.

X was the head of his Firey's department, X was the person who convinced Four to let Firey keep his job, X saw something in him and believed in him when no one else did.

And now they were dead...

Firey felt tears run down his face but he made no sound.

"The funeral will be sometime next week, I'll send you the address after I hang up, please go if you can," Four sighed.

"Of course, thank you for telling me," Firey said.

Four hung up and Firey stood there, staring at nothing, frozen in place, not even wiping his tears.

His phone buzzed and it was a text from Four, with a link to the directions to where X's funeral would take place.

Opening the link, Firey realised he wouldn't need directions, he knew the route well.

The funeral and burial was happening in his home town.

After a bit of research and talking to other members of the agency , Firey learned that X was actually from his home town, they even attended the same high school Firey went to, in the time they had worked together, Firey was completely unaware of this.

Firey sat down on the sofa, processing everything that had happened and will happen. He sat there for a long time.

When Leafy came home, Firey told her he was going to visit their home town.

Firey had been worried about telling her because she also grew up there, they grew up together, on the same street and Leafy was a sentimental person so there was a chance she would want to visit her childhood home.

To his surprise, she had no wish to go with him, her parents weren't there because they were travelling and she had nothing else left to do there.

Firey was slightly relieved but hid it well, he hid everything well, he didn't tell Leafy anything about X or the funeral.

He had to act like someone very important to him hadn't just died, he had to keep playing with Grove and spending time with Leafy like everything was normal.

...

A week later he was on a train. En route to his town, with a black suit in a small suitcase, watching the fields speed by.

The agency had arranged accommodation for the people in attendance, if they wanted to use it and Firey accepted the offer so he would have a place to get changed when he got there.

...

The sky was cloudy but it wasn't raining, the chill that blew in the air made up for that though.

Firey stood amongst a decently sized crowd, listening to the preist say a few final words then allowed people X was close to, to give eulogies.

Four didn't read their own eulogy, they got a random agent to read them out as they stood beside the open grave.

It was a grim experience to say the least, everyone who was there looked equally sad, X had been an important person for each of them.

Everyone they interacted with thought thought they were a sweet, ray of sunshine, a refreshing change from the constant negativity

they were used to.

X treated everyone kindly, saw the good in things and always did their best to aid whenever they could, they always meant well.

Something had been taken from everyone there, a part of them that would be gone forever.

Firey stared at the sunflower covered coffin as it was lowered slowly into the ground, the only sounds that were heard was the quiet sobs of unknown people and Firey felt a feeling of disconnection from the world around him.

He was there but he didn't feel like he was, nothing felt real as he watched the coffin hit the earth and the first bit of soil landed on it.

He simply stood there, not crying, not seething in anger, he was just there, unable to express anything.

He must have spaced out because the next thing he knew, there was a hand on their shoulder trying to get his attention.

He looked to his right to see Blocky standing there with a forced smile on his face.

"You doing alright, man?" he asked.

"I don't know," Firey shrugged.

"Understandable, this whole thing gets more fucked up by the day," Blocky glowered.

"This is exactly what happened when Woody died,"

Firey hadn't expected that and he somehow felt worse than he already did.

"I wouldn't know, Woody died the day I was captured," Firey snapped.

"Sorry, I shouldn't have mentioned *that* but what I'm trying to say is that I'm sick of all of this," Blocky sighed.

"This is why I quit, I can't deal with this shit Firey, people are dying for no reason and all we can do is dress ourselves up and attend their funeral,"

Firey slumped slightly as thoughts and memories he had tried so hard to bury came back to him.

"I've got to go, I'm not staying for the afterparty. Look out for yourself, Firey," Blocky said as he walked away.

Firey stood near the grave, watching the grave diggers do their job when he saw a navy haired person standing just a bit away from him.

Firey walked up to Four and stood beside him without saying a word, unsure of what to say.

They stood side by side until the grave was fully filled, Four turned away from Firey, hiding their face from him.

Firey knew not to say anything, Four would do anything than openly cry in front of someone so Firey also directed his gaze elsewhere.

"This will end soon, Firey,"

Firey looked at Four as they still didn't face Firey but kept their eyes fixed on the grave.

"They'll all be dead, I'm going to ensure that," Four said in a deep voice that scared Firey.

This was a side of Four Firey had never seen before and it was creepy.

Four was usually strangely energetic and bubbly in an intimidating way. They always had a glint in their eyes and a smile on their face, even when they discussed really dark subjects.

Seeing Four without that glint, without that smile just felt wrong, the idea of X being dead, felt wrong.

Four placed a rose down on X's grave, whispering under their breath as they blinked back tears that Firey pretended not to see.

And with that, Four left and Firey was the only one left in the graveyard.

He walked through the rows and rows of headstones, he could hear birds chirping as the wind blew through the trees.

The clouds on the horizon were becoming a jarring shade of grey and black, the promise of a storm.

Despite this, Firey continued slowly, his footsteps along the path were the only human made sound he heard.

He felt like he was walking in a dream, his surroundings felt far away and he struggled to walk in a straight line.

He knew where he was going though, he hadn't been in a while but it usually brought him a bit of comfort.

It wasn't a happy place,he had been here many times but it was never easy, his chest felt tight and breathing was hard, like it was stuck in his throat and he shook ever so slightly.

This place was probably a major turning point in his life, it scared him,

He took a right-turn, walking through other graves making sure not to step on them, even slightly and a minute later he was there.

He stood in front of two graves, his fists clenched tightly.

He took a shaky breath before he greeted them, composing himself.

"Hey mom, hey dad,"

He kneeled down, his emotions getting the better of him as he began to cry.

"Please help me,"

The silence that surrounded him was deadly, the cold air biting into him cashing him to shiver.

"Everything is bad, it's all a mess and it's my fault, I've told you all of this before but things are just worse now," he sniffed.

"People are being hurt, someone I cared about is dead and I just want to know what I should do,"

"It's all a horrible, blood-stained mess that I could have avoided if I had been smarter, I dragged myself into all of this," Firey's hand dug into the dirt, grabbing it as he had nothing else to hold.

"I've done horrible things, I've helped people do horrible things and I want it to stop but I don't know what I'm doing anymore," he sobbed.

"I want to go back to Leafy,"

He stopped for a moment, wiping his eyes as it dawned on him that he had told his parents so much but he hadn't mentioned Leafy

"You guys remember Leafy right?" he sniffle as he wiped his eyes.

"I married her a few years ago, I know we were young but I think we can still be happy with each other,"

Firey smiled as he remembered how his mother always said Leafy was a lovely little girl and how his father used to tease him about her.

"You'd love her even more now, she's amazing, perfect even," he sighed. "And way too good for me,"

"I really love her, she's always so kind and happy, she's letting me live with her even after all this time,"

"She has a kid, he isn't mine, unfortunately but he's the best little guy ever. He looks like her and he's just as kind," he smiled at the thought of them both.

"His name is Grove and he reminds me that the world isn't all horrible and sick, he's just a small ray of sunshine," he laughed slightly.

"They're both taking care of me and I hope I can do the same for

them,"

"I love them,"

Firey's heart felt heavy as he remembered saying those words in this exact spot over a decade ago.

He was eleven years old, standing in front of a sight that no child should have to see.

He was crying, his grandmother had stepped away from he for a moment to talk to some friends of his parents, his grandparents were going to be his new legal guardians.

He was alone until he felt someone tap his shoulder.

It was Leafy, his best friend held out her hand for him to hold, with a sympathetic smile.

He took it, for once being mature and not complaining about cooties or "icky girls".

He cried while he spoke to her and she stayed holding his hand and listening.

"It's not fair, Leafy. Why did they have to die? They're my mom and dad and they aren't here anymore,"

"It's... it's not fair," he sobbed, fully breaking.

Leafy pulled him in and hugged him, he returned the gesture, hugging her tightly, burying his face on her shoulder.

"I love them, Leafy, I want them back,"

"I know you're sad Firey but I'll be here for you," she comforted.

"We're best friends after all,"

Looking back, that was the first time Firey ever remembered hugging her.

Leafy was there for him after his parents died, she would check on

him everyday and offer to hang out, without her he probably wouldn't have done any kind of socialising from the age of eleven to sixteen.

They had grown up side by side, with each other through the good and the bad and then a few years later, through better and worse, sickness and health.

As a soft smile played at his lips, he wiped his eyes and placed down two roses he had bought from a small flower stall at the gates of the cemetery.

"Thanks for listening guys, I don't visit often but I miss you,"

He left the grave but before he left the cemetery he made one last visit to X, admiring the flowers and ornaments that had been placed at his final resting space.

It was a dangerous act with most members of the agency being in one place, if anyone that wanted them all dead knew about it, it was a prime place to plant a bomb.

But none of them cared, they knew the danger but X had done too much for all of them to just have a handful of people bid him farewell. Everyone there wanted to give him a proper send-off, a small of thanking him for his kindness and work.

Firey stared at the rose Four had placed there and multiple feelings struck him at once, grief, remorse, regret, anger and urgency

This all needed to stop, it needed to end.

"X, I know you didn't like all this, even though you never admitted it but believe me when I say that I'm going to finish what you started to make sure that no one else gets hurt,"

"That's a promise I make to you, not as my boss but as someone who believed in me, someone who gave me a chance, someone who I like to call, a friend,"

Firey walked away, leaving the grave behind him just as the storm approached.

...

He chose not to stay at the hotel, his train would get in late but he wanted to go home, this town didn't feel like home anymore.

In truth, no where felt like home anymore.
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Chapter 20

Once again Firey's cursed, secret phone rang again, once again he got a bad feeling in his stomach, once again he reluctantly answered.

"What is it Four?" he asked.

"I found one of them," Four's voice sounded happy, not a normal happy but an unhinged happy.

"What?" Firey questioned cautiously.

"I found one of the bastards in that gang, he's a pillar, definitely involved with most of what they do," they laughed slightly, unnerving Firey.

"What about it?" he asked.

"Just meet me at the warehouse that we use as storage, I'll explain everything to you, tonight "

Four didn't want for a response and hung up, Firey sighed in frustration as he checked the online bus-table for a bus that would drop him near the docks.

And so a few hours later, Firey said goodbye to Leafy, telling her Blocky had invited him out.

Blocky was the only person in his normal life who knew what he did for work, Blocky knew that it needed to be kept under wraps and so when he had quit he told Firey he could use him as an excuse if he ever needed to leave for a task temporarily.

Firey sat on the bus that had hardly any passengers due to how late it was, he sat close to the back at a window seat, watching the raindrops fall on the window as condensation began to form.

The docks were the last stop on the route, by the time they got there Firey was the last person on the bus.

"You sure this is where you want to be?" the driver asked as Firey exited.

"Nope," Firey sighed as he stepped onto the slippery, wet pavement and stood in a large puddle.

The driver shrugged, closing the doors and driving away.

It must have looked rather suspicious, Firey was very clearly not a dock worker and it was fairly late to go visiting the docks on a night like this.

He walked through a large gate to an industrial area, full of cranes, shipment containers and heavy machinery and there was very little light to see where he was going.

Squinting through the darkness, partially to see but mainly because he was walking in the direction the rain fell and it hurt his eyes to have them fully open, he shoved his hands in his pockets and trudged through the downpour.

He was soaked to the skin, scowling as he kept looking around to make sure no one saw him, it was highly unlikely, he was in the darkest, furthest part of the docklands, at this time of night, the only people around here would be drunkards and idiotic teenagers.

Once he arrived at the storage unit, he stood under the shelter of the small door that allowed access to the main hall of it.

As he stood there waiting for the door to be opened, a large amount of water fell from the pipes above him, fully dowsing him causing him to yell in frustration, just as Four opened the door.

Four gave him a strange look that Firey returned with a scowl as he walked in, trailing a puddle behind him.

Firey stood shivering as Four went searching through a bag he had, pulling out a photo of a blond man with a movie-star smile, photos of a house and many other papers.

"This," Four began as they picked up the photo of the man "Is Loser, an important figure in the crime scene, he's a con-artist, been doing it for years,"

"Oh what, I know him he's one of my favourite actors," Firey said with disappointment at the fact someone he admired was actually a criminal.

"He stopped acting years ago, though I'm sure you already knew that, as far as the general public is concerned he's past his prime, they don't care about him," Four said with noticeable glee.

"Yeah but still, I really liked him, what's he got to do with all of this?" Firey questioned.

"Well, after... recent events, I've been working non stop and I found out he has a high level of importance, a lot of the evidence says that he was involved with..." Four trailed off, unable to say what they wanted to but Firey understood.

"He... killed X?" Firey was stunned.

"Not exactly but he ordered the hit on them," Four said with hatred.

"Son of a bitch," Firey sighed, running his fingers through his hair.

"But, I've found everything about the bastard, where he lives, where he goes, what he does," Four smiled.

"We can bring this closer to it's end, Firey" Four exclaimed, looking Firey right in the eyes.

Four dug in deeper into the bag, pulling out a box and handing it to Firey.

"You can bring justice,"

Firey took the box and opened it and his heart sank when he saw what was inside.

A B&T VP9, a gun that provides a quieter shot, typically used by police when called out to kill wounded animals.

It's known as a "veterinary weapon" the silencer was built so it would cause less disturbance when fired.

Firey shoved the box back to Four.

"No," was all he said.

"You told me I wouldn't have to kill anyone else, you promised me there would be no more blood on my hands,"

"I never promised you anything," Four said calmly.

"I'm not doing it Four, I've had enough of the bloodshed,"

"Think about it, if you do this you'll scare them, they'll get sloppy if they're scared and it'll all fall into place,"

"But how can we justify this?"

"Firey, they don't care about justifying who they kill, you can end this sooner by doing this, believe me,"

Firey folded his arms over his chest, unsure of what to say or do.

"You want your wife to be safe, you want everything to be normal, the only way that will happen is if all of this ends," Four stated.

"It's worth it, Firey,"

Four took out an envelope from the bag and handed it to Firey along with the box.

"Hitman money?" Firey raised an eye brow.

"That's not even all of it, once this ends you'll get all of your payment for your work," Four explained.

"This money will be useful for you won't it? You want to live a nice life with that little *family* you have, right?"

Firey hated how right they were, he knew he was going to get money once this ended and if he could get it soon...

That money could help allow them to maybe start a family together, if course he loved Grove but if there was a chance to have a kid with Leafy he would do anything for it.

Without a word, Firey took the envelope and the box. It felt like such a tainted thing to do.

Four handed him the information he would need and told him he would need to meet with another agent when he plans to execute the kill so he could get a body bag and cleaning supplies.

Firey left, walking through the rain, doing his best to keep everything in his hands as dry as possible.

He heard a car driving behind him, the headlights were so bright, when he turned around they blinded him.

It turns out it was Four, they pulled up beside him and told him there wouldn't be any buses until 6AM.

Firey got in the car, glad to be out of the rain and not having to deal with the chill.

The drive was silent and there was a soft tension lingering, Firey was glad when they stopped outside the apartment and he could get out.

He hid everything under his shirt, and quickly went to the bathroom when he got inside so he could place everything under a towel temporarily.

Leafy was already in bed, once he made certain of this he took all of his items and put them in a bag that he hid in an old suitcase.

He changed out of his clothes, rubbed a towel on his hair and threw on an old jersey to sleep in.

He hauled himself upstairs, feeling as tired as ever and still freezing.

He got into bed as carefully as he could but he still woke Leafy up a bit.

"Hmm, you were out late," she murmered under the blanket.

"Yeah, I just had a nice time, Blocky and I had a lot to catch up on," he said.

"That's nice, you're so cold though and I wanted warm," she mumbled tiredly.

However, she turned over and snuggled against him.

Firey held her close, wrapping her arms around her, holding her tightly.

He quickly heard her snore softly while he embraced her.

His mind raced while he recalled what agreed to do, he felt sick.

He buried his face in Leafy's hair and begged whatever God was up there for any kind of forgiveness.

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Chapter 21

Leafy sat at her table wondering why her life was just a mess nowadays.

She still had no idea what to do about Grove and Firey and whether or not she should tell Firey the truth.

Work was piling up and she just felt like she was going to collapse all the time, even Grove was stressing her out more than usual.

She rested her head against the table, lightly banging her forehead against it.

Her phone buzzed, catching her attention. She reached out for it, checking the caller ID.

It was Pin.

"Hey Leafy, are you free?" Pin asked happily.

"Wow, I'm fine Pin, how are you?"

"Oh hush, just answer the question,"

"Yeah, I'm free I guess, why?"

"Wanna go out for drinks with me and GB?"

"What about Grove? I can't just leave him with Firey,"

"Just bring him over to my place, he and Coiny get along so well, it's no problem,"

"Hm, you know what? I think I will, maybe I need this,"

"Yes! That's the Leafy I know and love, I missed youuuuu !"

"Yeah, yeah. Anyways, I'll be there in an hour is that alright?"

"Yes, of course! Can't wait to see you, wear something nice!"

"Don't I always? Anyways, see you Pin,"

"Bye!"

Leafy hung up, smiling as she put her phone down, she got up to get ready.

"Firey, are you alright?" Leafy asked.

She didn't get a response, he was staring off into space, he did this a lot, especially recently.

"Firey? Firey, is everything okay?" she waved her hand in front of his face and he blinked a few times before returning to himself.

"Oh, uh, yeah what's up?" he asked.

"I'm going out with Pin and Golfball, is that okay?" she questioned.

"Yeah, that's fine, go ahead,"Firey smiled wanly.

"Are you sure you're okay? You seem, out of it?" Leafy wondered.

"Yeah, I just feel a bit under the weather, I'll probably just get some rest," Firey shrugged. "Oh, what about Grove?"

"Coiny is going to look after him, he usually does, they're like two peas in a pod," Leafy laughed slightly.

Firey had never gotten on with Coiny particularly well, they were only "friends" because of Leafy, something about the idea of Coiny being closer with Grove than he was didn't sit right with him.

As much as he wanted to mind Grove tonight, he couldn't.

He had a job to do.

"Yeah, you rest up and feel better soon, I'm gonna go get ready," Leafy called as she walked upstairs.

She tied her hair into a ponytail, with two bits of hair hanging at the side of her head and using a curling iron she curled them, making two cute tendrils, since her hair only fell to just above her shoulders, there wasn't much she could do in regards to styling it.

She searched her wardrobe, Pin had told her to wear something nice and when Pin went out for drinks she only picked fancy places.

After a bit of looking, she found a black, backless dress that fit her fairly well, it was form fitting but she could deal with it.

She removed her clothes, now standing in just her panties and bra as she took off her shirt.

"Hey Leafs, where's the- SHIT SORRY,"

Firey had taken one step into the room and just as quickly walked out when he saw Leafy.

"You idiot! Why didnt you just knock?!" she yelled in embarrassment.

To be honest, she didn't know why they were acting like this, they had both seen each other naked before, it was nothing new, maybe it had just been so long she wasn't used to the idea of someone seeing her like this.

As Leafy quickly threw on the dress, she realised she couldn't reach the button at the back that clasped around her neck, keeping the dress up and she also wanted to put a necklace on that she wouldn't be able to reach the back of.

Feeling rather sheepish and awkward, she called Firey in.

"Uh, would you be able to help me with this?" she asked, gesturing to the button.

"Oh, sure," he nodded.

It was a small button and Firey struggled with it for a moment, Leafy wriggled trying to be comfortable when she felt Firey's hand hold her side, keeping her still.

"You need to stop fidgeting, I can't get this in," he told her, genuinely in deep concentration. "There we go,"

Firey's eyes widened slightly as he realised where his hand was and he quickly retracted it.

"Sorry," he said.

"It's fine but do you think you could clip this?" she asked, holding up a pretty, rose-gold necklace.

Once again, he struggled with the small clip, as he tried to attach it, his skin grazed Leafy's and for some reason it was the only thing she noticed.

He squinted his eyes as he tried to see what he was doing and moved his head closer, Leafy could feel his breath on the back of her neck and her muscles grew tense.

"Okay, I think that's safe," Firey told her, pulling away and smiling at her in the mirror, "You look really pretty, by the way,"

Leafy took his hand and kissed it gently. "Thank you,"

She turned around, looking up at Firey and smiling at him, he let go of her hand and reached out, cupping her face gently with his hands.

They admired the other for a moment before Firey lowered himself slightly, still with his hands on her face and kissed her gently.

They both closed their eyes as the kiss deepened and Leafy placed her hands over his.

His hands were warm, she wondered if he felt her own grow warmer at his touch.

They pulled apart, gazing into each other's eyes, a light blush dusting their cheeks.

"I almost don't want to go now," Leafy joked. "Almost,"

"As much as I want you to stay, you should go out and have a nice

time, you deserve it," Firey smiled softly.

"Thank you," she said, giving his hand a quick squeeze as she left.

"I'm serious Leafy, you look amazing," Firey called after her.

Leafy felt good, she felt happy as she drove to Pin's house with Grove in the back singing to the radio, or trying to.

It was the usual spiel with dropping Grove off, Coiny gave him a high-five when he saw him and chatted with Leafy for a moment before Pin finally came to the door.

"You look great, Leafy," Coiny said with a thumbs up.

"Thank you! I feel great honestly,"she gushed.

"Good to hear, it's nice to see you with your glow back," he smiled.

"Things have just been nice lately, I'm making the most of it,"

"You're doing great, I'm impressed," he laughed slightly.

"It means a lot to hear you say that," she sighed.

A silence fell between them as they stared at each other, golden-copper eyes meeting forest-green ones.

"Just happy to help," he said happily.

"Oh my gosh Leafy! You look so good!" Pin exclaimed when she emerged from the bathroom.

"Awww thanks Pin," she grinned, hugging her.

They bid goodbye to Coiny and left to get the taxi they had ordered.

They met with Golfball at the bar and they say in a comfortable booth, chatting about current events and people in their lives.

"No, I'm telling you, she's just copying my ideas,"

"I'm sure it's not that bad GB, Basketball probably just feels inspired

by you,"

"I have my Underground Company and she just so happened to make an AboveGround Company? And she makes very similar products? Don't think so,"

Leafy was having fun, she found herself relaxing and feeling comfortable and just having an all round wonderful time, even Pin drank slowly so she didn't get tipsy right away.

The topic of Firey or Grove or anything like that wasn't brought up at all, it allowed her to forget everything for a while and just pretend she lived a different life.

Playing pretend was okay, it didn't hurt anyone as long and no one knew about it.

She was just having a nice time, without fear, without lies, without hurt, she was just trying to be happy.

That wasn't so bad, was it?
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Slight filler before the next chapter cus Zoo wee Mama.

This chapter doesn't even need to exist but I just feel like it flows better of I have this instead of just saying "Leafy went out blah blah blah" in the next chapter.

Hope you enjoyed this chapter.

XOXO
LeafCake

Chapter 22

DISCLAIMER: Graphic description of blood/death.
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out.

He wasn't above the law persay, but if he was taken to court, he would get off scot free, as he said, it would just give away too many things the service tried to keep hidden.

The evening had a pleasant warmth, he was way too warm with the hoodie and he would look out of place in such a well off area but it needed to be done.

He watched the people on the bus, none of them knew where he was going, what he was going to do and none of them knew he had a gun.

The idea of that was scary, someone just having a gun and not knowing.

He sighed as he imagined the people and their lives, living the, blissfully unaware that he was going to end a life.

He felt sick and tired, he wanted to go home.

A while later, the bus pulled into his stop, he thanked the driver as he got off and walked down the street.

The houses got bigger and nicer the further he went and he could tell he was close.

He saw a playground, the equipment was clean and we'll maintained. He watched the parents with their kids, none of them knew their neighbor would be laying in his own blood.

He wondered if they would tell their kids that their neighbor was dead or would they just ignore it? It probably depended on how close they were he assumed.

He pushed these thoughts out of his mind as he entered the building, using a key that had been stolen from Loser's bag a few weeks ago and as quietly as possible, he walked into the apartment.

It was fancy, to say the least. Everything was sleek and new and it looked really expensive, it suited Loser perfectly, he had never been shy about his "refined tastes".

Firey stood in the living room, fiddling with the gun and loading it, he ran his fingers along the cold metal and felt that disgusting emptiness he was becoming all too used to.

How was he going to do this?

It needed to be as clean as possible and it needed to be a surefire shot, in under no circumstances was Loser able to survive.

The gun was better suited for close range, he needed to get close and he needed to hit something vital.

Point blanc range, in the head.

He had three bullets so he could shoot a second time if needs be but he hoped he wouldn't.

Firey waited for an hour, he didn't move at all, he stood there and counted the minutes as they ticked by.

Everything felt so slow to him and his throat was dry, he needed water or something.

He felt a strange sense of anticipation while holding the gun. He could rant about how killing felt weird to him now and all that bullshit but he knew the truth deep down.

He itched to pull that trigger, so much so that his body twitched.

He wanted vengeance for the last five years, he wanted vengeance for X.

He wanted vengeance for himself.

He wanted to see this man slump over in pain.

He wanted to see this man dead.

He caught a glimpse of himself in a mirror across the room, noticing he had a sick smirk on his face and a weird look in his eyes.

No, that couldn't be him...

He wasn't some trigger happy psycho, he didn't look forward to killing people.

He was a normal person! He was just in a bad line of work.

He was normal, he has a wife, he has a good life and good people get good lives.

Why was he lying to himself...

....

He was taken from his thoughts when he heard a key twist in the front door and he moved just behind the door of the living room and took his position.

In those moments, Firey could feel everything around him, he felt his blood pumping in his veins, he felt his heart beating faster than he had ever known, he felt his chest raise up and down as he took slow, heavy breaths, attempting to calm himself.

He heard Loser's footsteps grow closer and closer.

His hands trembled slightly as he placed a finger on the trigger.

He watched the door handle turn downwards and the door open slightly.

One.

Firey raised his arms, positioning his shoulders so they wouldn't be damaged by recoil.

Two.

Loser opened the door, one foot over the threshold.

Three.

He didn't even have time to turn his head before Firey placed the muzzle against his temple.

Bang.

Loser's body fell against the wall before it slid down against the ground, his blood on both surfaces.

Without thinking or hesitation, Firey shot him in the chest, creating a bigger mess but ensuring death.

He stared at the lifeless body before him, the once handsome man was almost unrecognisable.

"So much for that comeback movie, huh?" Firey shrugged as he glared at the guy.

Somehow, someone Firey had admired for years, someone who he had looked up to, was now someone who filled him with hatred.

He went to his bag and took out the cleaning supplies and got to work.

It wasn't fun, he had to hold himself back from gagging everytime he mopped the blood.

Movies are always wrong, it's never just wet blood that wipes away easily, it's thick, there's remnants of whatever body part was damaged, it all clusters together in a sickening way.

The blood doesn't simply go away.

It'll be on his hands, for as long as he lives.

Loser's phone buzzed and Firey took it and checked who it was.

It was a text from a person who's contact was called Cake.

Hey Loser, thanks for dinner tonight it was wonderful, it really means a lot I know work has been tough lately,

I love you.

Firey inhaled sharply as all of a sudden, he felt a wave of guilt crush him.

Despite who Loser was, he had family, he had loved ones.

He mattered to people.

And he had just taken him away from them.

He looked around the room, at the photos in it and saw there were multiple of Loser and Cake, they both looked so happy in them, Cake looking at Loser with such love and admiration.

Firey blinked back tears that formed at the thought of what he had done.

Everyone he has ever killed had family.

Every life he had ever taken was just as complex as his own.

He killed people who were just doing their job like he was.

He cried, without a sound, the tears simply fell as he thought about everything he has done.

Why was all of this only dawning on him now? Why didnt he feel any remorse until this moment?

Was it because of Leafy? Was it because he finally had a "normal" life going for him? Was that why he finally thought about this properly?

He had never confronted the idea that he was killing other people, everytime he killed, he just didn't think.

He was doing his job, bring things closer to an end.

That's how he justified it, time and time again.

He trying to get back to Leafy, anyone that stood in his way was an obstacle that he got rid of, he followed orders.

Tunnel vision, blindly killing.

Now that he had what he wanted, he no longer experienced the cold, lack of emotion mindset that allowed him to do this so many times.

All of this weighed on him, somehow it physically hurt him.

He held his breath as he placed Loser's body into the bodybag, a struggle because he was limp and didn't take a breath until it was zipped up.

It was done.

Once more.

He called Four and told them the job had been completed.

When Four answered, they told Firey to carry it out to a van that was waiting outside, it would take him to where he could dispose of the bag.

Using all of his strength, Firey placed the bodybag on his back, his heart beating nervously as he walked out into the hall and got into the elevator.

No one saw him leave and go to the van just across the street.

He knew the agent driving the van, the man in charge of clean up.

"Hey Tree," he sighed as he got in.

"Hello, Firey," he replied.

Tree was related to Leafy, he was her uncle, although they were fairly similar in age, Tree was five years old when Leafy was born, his parents hadn't even expected him.

They didn't talk much though, Tree was always working and after some time, Leafy stopped trying.

They drove in silence until they arrived at the docks where they both got out of the van.

They were near a slipway, Tree walked to a small storage unit, opening it to reveal a Rib, a large engine powered dingy.

Tree rolled it down the slipway, setting it up for launch, using the surrounding lights to help him.

Firey could hardly see anything through the darkness, Tree must have some good eyesight.

Tree called him down, Firey carried the body but slipped due to the wetness of the slipway.

Tree rolled his eyes and helped him up, putting the body in the Rib himself.

A few minutes later, Tree was driving out of the docks, out into the dark, murky sea.

"How do you know where we're going?" Firey asked as he watched the lights of the city and the docks grow smaller and smaller behind them.

"Ive done this too many times," Tree shrugged.

"Where are we going? Are we just going to dump the body?" Firey questioned.

"No, we aren't but we're bringing it to a boat a few kilometers off shore, it'll take the body to international waters out in the middle of the ocean and it'll be dumped there, if it ever gets found, it'll be unrecognisable," Tree explained.

Firey sat back uncomfortably, the waves causing the Rib to go upwards the crash down as it sped along, it made him feel a bit sick.

Tree didn't seem to care, he seemed tired and almost empty, there was no light in his eyes.

Firey wondered if his years of service were taking their toll.

He decided to keep his mouth shut, it was the best option.

Soon, in the distance, he saw a boat, Tree increased the speed and Firey clung to the seat for dear life.

Within a few minutes they arrived, Tree radioed the boat and slowed to a halt beside it.

Tree hopped aboard, turning back toward Firey to take the bag.

"Do you need me to get on?" Firey asked, heaving the bag toward Tree.

"No, you can sit there for a moment, we have a long drive back to the docks," Tree said as he walked away.

Firey thanked him, waited until he was gone and then threw up over the side of the Rib.

He hated water and he hated the sea.

After 10 minutes of waiting and feeling nauseous, Firey heard an engine start up and then Tree hopped back into the Rib.

Once again, there was silence but Tree handed Firey a bottle of water and a tablet that would stop him feeling sick.

Once the got back, Firey helped Tree roll the Rib back up the slip and lock up the storage unit.

They stood for a moment in the howling wind, both of them aware that they were one in the same.

Two people who pushed too far when they started and were now paying the price.

Two people who ruined their own lives.

"Tree," Firey called as he watched the other walk away.

"Hm?" Tree responded, turning slightly.

"Leafy is doing well, she's got a good life going for herself," Firey said.

"Good, at least someone I know isn't doing dirty work,"

"She has a kid now, I'd say she'd love for you to meet him,"

Tree stopped, fully facing Firey now and for once there was emotion in his eyes.

Sadness? Regret? Firey couldn't place it but it was one of the two.

"You and I both know it's too late for that,"

And just like that, Tree left.

Firey stood under a flickering light of a lamppost, he felt bitterly cold and his shoes were soaked.

He walked into the city, away from the docks so it didn't look suspicious when he called a taxi.

He had the money now, he could spend a bit.

The fare was expensive and Firey remembered why he didn't like taxis.

He got dropped fifteen minutes from the apartment, he didn't walk straight home though, he was still too messed up.

He walked into a 24 hour store and bought himself a beer, it was cheap and it tasted horrible but he didn't want to go back to whiskey or vodka.

He stood on a random street corner, it was almost one in the morning and everything was still.

He heard a hum of people in the distance, car horns beeping and alarms sounding, city life at its finest.

Once he finished the beer, he put the can in a bin and made his way home, he was no longer shaking but he still felt sick, not physically just mentally.

At long last he was home, there were no lights on, no one was awake and he was greatful for that.

He went to the bathroom, washing his hands, though there was nothing visible on them, physically and he put his clothes on the drying rack.

He didn't go upstairs, he could lay down beside Leafy after what he

had done tonight.

He didn't deserve to that's for sure.

He rested on the couch, unable to get comfortable no matter what he did, he knew he wasn't going to sleep that night.

He checked his phone and saw a text from Leafy saying that she got a bit carried away and was going to stay at Golfball's house tonight.

There was another text that had been sent twenty minutes before he got home.

I love u Firey i don't kno if i say itt enough but i love u and im glad ur backk.

She was clearly drunk but regardless it but a small smile on Firey's face.

Tears began to spill as he read the text over and over again.

He dropped his phone on the ground, curling up into a ball, clutching a pillow to his chest as he sobbed quietly.

The apartment was completely empty, no one would hear him, he was embarrassed, he had no right to cry.

And what's worse, is that he wanted comfort more than anything else, there was no way in hell he deserved it.

Firey had never felt so alone in his life.
= =

Who shall have a little fishy on a little dishy, who shall have a salmon, when the boat comes in?

Hope you enjoyed that chapter!

XOXO
LeafCake.

Chapter 23

Firey was alive, he was breathing, he could feel his muscles working and he could hold things around him.

He was alive, flesh and bone.

But it didn't feel like it.

Two weeks had passed since he killed Loser and it was always in his thoughts.

It felt like he was sleepwalking through his day, he was interacting with people and he tried to do things normally but it just felt like he wasn't there.

He spaced out quite a bit, he wasn't even thinking deeply or reflecting, he just mentally wasn't there, always with a far-away look in his eyes.

Leafy, being the person she is, noticed this.

At first she thought he might just be a bit down, trying to get used to life and such but after a while she thought it was lasting a bit too long.

He wasn't really eating as much, he kind of just picked at his food, taking slow, sporadic bites.

He seemed... dull, he didn't smile as much and when he did it seemed void of real emotion.

She noticed that the only time he seemed to smile properly was at her or Grove.

She did think it was sweet that her kisses and Grove's silly games could make him happy but she wanted him to be alright, she didn't

like seeing him staring at nothing.

Firey needed something to do, she was at work and couldn't keep him company, being alone wouldn't be healthy for him with his current state.

He denies that anything is wrong but she knows.

She asked him about it a few days after it started, he told her he just felt a bit sick and she believed him.

Then she asked him again and he said he felt fine and that she shouldn't worry about it.

That was the response she usually gets from him but she knows it isn't true.

When she's with him, she makes sure to let him know that things are okay, she'll hold his hand, lean against him when they sit together and snuggle against him when they're in bed, kissing him when he goes to sleep and once more when he wakes up.

But she has no idea what he's like when he's alone, if all he does is sit there or mindlessly clean or make dinner, it's not good for him.

He needs to take his mind off things and she thought of a way to do it.

"Hey Firey, can you do me a little favour?" she asked one morning.

"Sure, what is it?" he replied.

"Can you pick Grove up from school? His usual minder is sick," she explained.

"Of course, I'd be happy to," he said.

And so for the next week, Firey would wait outside the school gates for Grove to come out of school.

Grove would always run to Firey and hug him, Firey returned the gesture but always wondered why Grove was such an affectionate

child, it was probably because of Leafy, she was always giving him hugs or just holding him close whenever she could.

Firey usually took Grove through a park and would let him play in a small playground for a few minutes before taking him home.

Grove was always so energetic and happy, he babbled on about random things and always marvelled at bugs and animals he saw.

Firey would watch him play in the playground, not just to keep an eye on him but because he just liked seeing genuine happiness and emotions that were actually real and weren't faked.

Grove often asked him to play with him, his favourite game was to pretend that Firey was a monster and he had to fight him and the climbing frame was his "base".

Firey stopped counting the amount of times he flinched to catch Grove whenever he got too high or too close to an edge.

Firey would usually carry Grove in his shoulders because the green haired child would always demand it and Firey couldn't say no to him, he had Leafy's charm.

He was just like her in so many ways, they had the same smile, they both had gorgeous eyes that seemed to glimmer, they both stuck their tongue out when they concentrate.

They both meant the absolute world to him.

Everything he did from now on, he did for them, the money from his job would be enough for them to have good lives.

Leafy could do just fine without him, she took care of Grove, worked hard and maintained a high position in her job, she got everything she has through her own efforts.

Firey would never stop admiring her for that.

When he watched her rest and hold Grove close to her, he wondered what she was thinking.

Was she content?

Could Firey help her live a life where she wouldn't have to work so hard, where they could both carry the burden of existence?

He wanted to be by her side, he wanted to look after her, to keep her safe and really be a family.

He wanted to feel alive.

With her.

With Grove.

With a family of their own.

...

Leafy ran her fingers through Grove's hair and cupped his face with her hands.

"Oh, you're getting so big, where's my baby gone?" she laughed softly.

"Here, Mama!" he giggled as he sat on her lap.

"You're right, you're right there, you'll always be my baby, no matter how big you get," she smiled lovingly at him.

Grove smiled at her as he nuzzled into her when she held him in a gentle hug.

She rubbed her cheek against his soft, fluffy hair, appreciating the feeling of holding him in her arms.

She looked up at Firey who stood at the kitchen counter, resting his head in his hands, still with that lost look in his eyes.

"Firey?" she called.

...

"Firey?" she called again, louder this time.

He raised his head as he realised his name was being sad and looked at Leafy, she motioned for him to come over, to which he complied.

She patted the space beside her for him to sit down, he did so, waiting for her to say something.

She didn't, she leaned against him, shifting a bit until she was comfortable and finally sank into his warmth, resting her head on his shoulder.

Grove, noticing that Firey was now with them, pulled away from Leafy a bit so he was able to snuggle against both of them.

Firey put an arm around Leafy, holding her closer and the other one held Grove's hand.

Grove yanwed as he gazed up at Firey sleepily, trying his best to say awake.

"You can rest, Grove," Leafy whispered.

"But...wanna stay with you," he yawned.

"We're here, don't worry," Firey reassured.

Firey felt a fuzzy feeling in his chest when he felt Grove hold his hand tighter and pull it closer to himself.

Leafy glanced up at Firey with a tired smile on her face and love in her eyes.

Firey looked at her and Leafy saw that there was finally light in his eyes, they were no longer empty and lonely.

They held love, light and warmth, all the things she wanted most from Firey.

No, she didn't want those things.

She needed them.

She didn't ask for things from people, she didn't expect things from

anyone, she just wasn't that kind of person.

But with Firey, it was different.

She needed Firey to have light in his life, she needed him to be her source of warmth, she needed his love.

It kept her together knowing that he could look at her with those feelings, it helped her to live.

She hoped he saw the same things when he looked at her.

She needed him to know how much she loves him.

She suddenly kissed him, gently but lovingly, yearning for that warmth.

Firey was caught off guard but he returned the kiss with just as much love as she did.

He didn't deserve this, he didn't deserve her.

He pulled back from the kiss to properly see her, the love in her eyes hurt him.

After everything he had done, leaving her and hurting her, she still loved him, she still kissed him.

He didn't deserve it.

He was about to stand up, to take himself away from the happiness he felt when he felt her hand on his cheek.

"I know you aren't okay Firey, I know you're going through something but I'm here for you, even if I don't know what it is," she said.

"I love you Firey, please don't forget that,"

...

Screw not deserving her, he thought.

He has been through hell and back and he was finally allowed to have what he had quite literally fought and killed for and he was going to push it away?

No way.

He rested his head against hers, breathing in her perfume, the same one she wore before he left.

He kissed her again, deeper this time.

They gazed into each other's eyes, no more words were said but no more words were needed.

This was what they had both wanted, in the years they were apart they longed for the other's touch and now they had it.

Just one year ago this idea would have seemed impossible for both of them and yet here they were.

Neither of them knew that they were thinking the same thought in that moment.

"We feel like a real family,"

For Firey, it was something that mad ehim genuinely happy, something that made him feel like he was able to be a good person.

For Leafy, it struck fear into her heart, it all felt too perfect, too real, it made her feel like a horrible liar.

She was going to have to tell him everything soon.

Wasn't she?

= = = =

XOXO
LeafCake.

Chapter 24

NSFW WARNING
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...

Leafy told Pin about her date night plans and Pin was a big fan of it, after teasing Leafy relentlessly, she offered to take Grove so Leafy could do what she wanted with Firey.

"Oh my, an empty apartment and a date night, how scandalous," Pin teased.

"Shut up, Pin," Leafy groaned.

...

And so on Saturday evening, Leafy was looking through her clothes to find something flattering yet tasteful for her time with Firey.

Leafy had reserved a place at a fancy restaurant Tennisball had recommended, she needed to dress up a bit.

As she searched through her wardrobe, Firey walked in and looked over her shoulder.

"What's up?" she asked.

"Uh, is my stuff in there?" he wondered.

"Your stuff?" she said confusedly.

"Clothes," he clarified.

"Oh yeah, I put those in storage actually, didn't think you'd need them," she shrugged. "Come with me,"

Firey followed Leafy down to the cellar of the apartment building, each tenant had a small room where they could store things.

In Leafy's room, was a mix of old furniture, a box of old baby clothes and a bike and right at the back was a chest with a lock that was labelled, Firey.

"Its so weird to open this after all this time," she smiled. "I never imagined I'd have to,"

Firey noticed a shift in her demeanor as her expression softened.

She kneeled down, opening the box and she stared at the contents, taking out a shirt and held it in her hands.

"It took me so long to put all of these things in here," she sniffed.

"I couldn't just put it all in at once, it hurt too much so every few days I would put one thing in," she clutched the shirt tighter.

"I always hated doing it, it felt like I was losing more and more of you, I even developed a ritual everytime I put something in," she paused as she took a breath.

"I'd sit in front of the box and I'd hold the thing I was putting away in my hand, I'd remember times when you wore it and then I'd give it a kiss, kind of like a way of saying goodbye,"

Her vision grew blurry as the tears welled up, Firey quickly realised this and crouched down beside her, putting his arms around her.

"I hated it Firey, I didn't even want to put them away," she choked.

"I'm sorry Leafy, I'm here now, do you want me to deal with this?" he asked, in reference to the box of his things.

"No, we'll deal with it another time, just find what you need to and let's go have a nice time with each other," she responded.

Firey held her for a few more minutes, only letting go when he was certain she was okay, he knew she would have done the same.

Once they returned upstairs, they both got ready.

Leafy enjoyed getting ready for things and this was no exception, she wanted to look good and she would do her damn best, like she always did.

She wore a dark green dress that crossed over her chest and had a slit down the side of it, it was her favourite outfit along with a pair of black heels.

She decided to do a half-up-half-down style with her hair and curl it slightly, she also chose to keep her makeup on the more "natural" side, she enjoyed wearing makeup but she hated the process of having to take it off.

When she was finished, she stood in front of her mirror, doing silly poses because she felt good, she always did this when she wore something that made her happy but she would die if anyone saw her.

Firey had taken a white shirt that he ironed and paired it with a dark grey suit-vest, black trousers and a deep crimson tie, he thought he looked okay.

Obviously he didn't look as good as Leafy but in his eyes, no one could.

To say he was excited would be an understatement, he assumed Leafy had no idea but her offer of a date night meant the absolute world to him, all the while he was getting ready he had a stupid smile on his face, the kind that you only get when you love someone.

Maybe this was a sign that for once he was doing things right, he and Leafy could finally go back to what they were and things could be warm and loving again, like it was in the beginning.

He stood in the living room waiting for Leafy, their cab was due to arrive in ten minutes.

Firey had a huge dislike for cabs or any kind of private transport, it was such a waste of money to him when public transport was right there or when they had a car but Leafy convinced him to let her call one.

"Firey, I'm going to want to have a drink tonight and you aren't on the insurance for the car so the only way is if I call a taxi," she said.

"If you want to take a taxi and it'll make your evening better then go ahead but at least let me pay for it," he sighed.

"No, we'll split the fare," she insisted.

Firey had known he would give in as soon as she asked him about it,

he simply couldn't look her in the eyes and say no.

And when he saw her come down those stairs, he was once again transfixed by her.

She was gorgeous, everything about her was perfect and anyone who said otherwise could go to hell.

Her hair was shiny and soft, her eyes glimmered as the sunset from a nearby window hit them perfectly, like a sparkling green lagoon with sunlight dappling the ripples in the water, he was mesmerised.

The glow of the sun gave her a golden aura, she looked angelic, her soft smile as she gave him a small wave caused his goofy smile to return for a moment.

He watched her approach him, he remained frozen and unsure of what to do, he felt out of place in comparison, she genuinely was too good for him.

He was taken from his daze when he felt her gently kiss his cheek, she smiled sweetly at him, looking right into his eyes.

"You look great," she reassured.

How did she just know when he didn't feel right? Purely by looking at him she could tell how he felt.

"You look even better," he replied, winking at her, trying to get his own "flirty" persona back.

She laughed slightly as she took he hand and they left the apartment.

While they stood in the elevator, Firey raised her hand up and kissed it, a light blush tinted Leafy's cheeks and a small giggle escaped from her.

The taxi arrived and they got in, Leafy instructed the driver on where to go while Firey stared out the window.

The evening sun was warm and it bathed everything in a golden glow, none of it felt real.

Leafy began telling him about the restaurant and how Tennisball stumbled upon it, she told him what dishes he could consider getting and what the atmosphere was like.

She was a bit nervous about tonight, she prayed that she looked good and that she wouldn't embarrass herself.

Firey gazed wistfully out the window and Leafy could help but stare at him, even when he was relaxed his eyes maintained that fierceness they held, whenever she noticed he was looking at her it always felt like he was staring right through her, it made her feel so many things at once.

Firey usually made her feel a lot of things, confusion, curiosity, frustration, admiration, love and want.

There were times when she was with him and she found she couldn't function, especially when he was close to her.

This was one of those moments, he turned and made eye contact with her, flashing that heart-melting smile he had and she felt the air catch in her throat and she hiccuped.

Firey gave her a surprised look before smiling and laughing.

"Don't laugh," she said embarrassedly.

"Sorry, sorry I just forgot you hiccup when you're nervous," he chuckled.

She gave him a light punch in the arm but a smile played at her lips though she tried to hide it.

Soon, they arrived at the restaurant, Leafy spoke to the waitstaff at the door and they were taken to a candlelit table near the center of the room.

Leafy ordered a rosé wine while Firey had a chardonnay and they began chatting and joking about anything that came to mind.

It was such a lovely moment, Leafy smiled the whole time and she felt a happy feeling in her heart that she hadn't felt for a while, she

reached out and held Firey's hand.

Firey returned the gesture and they stayed like that until the food arrived.

The food was just as good as Tennisball said it would be and the service was top tier, it just made the evening perfect for them.

They didn't talk about anything sad or upsetting, they spoke about things that made them happy, memories of past dates, light hearted stories of their friends and similar things.

They were both truly happy in that moment, both of them were full of love for the other.

Of course they always loved each other but this was special, this was a feeling neither of them had imagined they'd feel again.

For once, they had goodness in their lives.

Leafy didn't want it to end so she suggested they walk home since it was still mild out and Firey happily agreed.

Once they finished their food, they ordered one more glass of wine, Firey sneakily paid for the food, despite Leafy insisting she would pay and they left.

Leafy linked her arm with his as they walked down the street, the moon rising as twilight fell and the stars emerged.

The street was quiet, no one was around and no cars drove past, it felt eerily magical.

"That was wonderful," Leafy sighed as she clutched his arm tighter.

"It really was," Firey agreed.

Nothing else was said, they didn't need to say anything, they wanted to appreciate the other's presence.

The walk home was slow and a bit long but they didn't mind, if they could do anything to make the night last longer, they would do it in a

heartbeat.

Leafy felt a bit disheartened when they got home but she didn't say anything, she didn't want to ruin everything.

She was pleasantly tired, when they were inside, she kicked her heels off and rested on her bed.

Firey loosened his tie and removed his vest, hanging it up carefully.

Leafy turned on her side and stretched her arms toward him, beckoning him over for a hug.

He lay beside her, letting her hold him tightly, their faces were inches apart.

"I never thought we'd get to do this again," she smiled softly. "It feels unreal,"

"Completely agree," he nodded.

Her eyebrows furrowed softly and a frown formed on her face.

"When you left, I shut down Firey, I didn't let myself feel anything, I didn't let myself burden anyone with my problems," she sighed.

"Looking back, I wish I had reached out to anyone, I wish someone had told me things were going to be okay,"

Firey's expression grew sad, he reached out and brushed some hair out of her face as he felt regret and guilt.

She took her hand and held it, kissing it gently just like he had earlier and she stood up, took off her necklace and pulled the hair tie out of her hair gently, placing it on her dresser before she turned back to face him.

"I know you haven't been okay recently Firey, I know there's something wrong,"

"I don't know what's going on, I know there's things you can't tell me, so I won't push you for answers," she walked over to him, a

determined look on her face.

She crawled on top of him, straddling his waist as she unbottoned a few of his shirt buttons.

"I want you to know that I'm here for you, Firey," she said quietly.

"Only you,"

She leaned forward and kissed him passionately, holding his face in her hands.

Firey's eyes widened in surprise but he settled into the kiss and his hands traveled to the small of her back.

She pulled away slowly unbottoning the rest of his shirt, splaying her hands out on his now exposed chest.

He shivered slightly at the touch, her hands were cold but the sensation of her touching him also felt foreign.

"I've missed you, Firey, you have no idea how much I've missed you," she breathed.

Her fingertips trailed down toward the belt of his pants, the light touch caused him to tense his muscles and Leafy smirked at this.

She sat upright, removing her dress, leaving her own chest exposed as well as her lower body.

Blush dusted Firey's cheeks as he attempted to control his breathing and stop himself from drooling like a dog.

Holy shit, she was pretty.

He took off his shirt, tossing it to the side and he grabbed her sides and pulled her downwards, their skin touching felt like a spark to Firey.

He wanted to hold her, to touch her, to feel her, he wanted her.

He hadn't been so close to her in so long, looking into her eyes and

feeling her against him felt like heaven.

Leafy was a lot more impatient, she wanted the same things he did but they were operating on different time frames.

She undid his belt and took off his pants, an excited thrill overtook her as she anticipated what she could do.

Just as she was about to remove his boxers, he carefully took her hands in his.

"Can we... do this slowly? I haven't been with you in so long, I want it to be special?" he asked sheepishly.

Leafy stared at him, slightly surprised, the old Firey would never have said that...

"I'm sorry if that's weird, we don't have to, don't worry about, let's just forget I said anything," he said with embarrassment, his blush now becoming a deep shade of crimson.

Leafy tilted her head and gave him a loving smile, she kissed him gently, allowing herself to savor his soft, warm lips.

"It isn't silly, don't worry, of course we can take things slowly," she said happily, pushing his hair out of his eyes.

"I don't mind what happens, just as long as I can feel you,"

Firey familiarised himself with Leafy, using the sounds she made as indication of what to do, their heavy breathing syncing as they held each other tightly, both of them relishing the euphoric feeling they provided the other with.

Firey's heavy breathing and the feeling of his hands on her was a blessing for her to hear, it meant he was alive, he was here.

He would stay.

...

Leafy woke up a few hours later, it was still dark outside and there

wasn't a sound to be heard aside from her husband's soft snoring.

She lay on top of him, her head nestled in the crook of his neck, his hand on her back, the other on her waist.

She raised her head and took in the features of his face, the peacefulness of his relaxed expression and the way his mouth was upturned slightly at the corners, he looked rather cute to her.

This was what she missed and she had it back, he clearly felt the same.

She watched him for a little while, feeling his chest raise up and down, moving her hand slightly so she could feel his pulse, proving to herself that he was real.

In that moment, she trusted him, she trusted that he wouldn't disappear again and she trusted that he loved her.

I'm that moment, she decided to be honest.

In that moment, she decided there would be no more secrets.

She was going to tell him everything, once she found the courage.
= =

J'taime, J'taime toujours, I am forever yours, sweet dreams, sweet dreams, mom Cher. You're always in my prayers.

I hope you enjoyed that chapter and I'm sure you'll love the next one.

XOXO
LeafCake

Chapter 25

Over the next week or so, Leafy wanted to make sure Firey was ready to hear the secret she had been keeping and so she decided to "test him".

She had him look after Grove, pick him up from school, make him food, tidy things up, play with him and lots of other similar tasks, all of which he did without much complaint.

She would tell him in the next few days, it would all work out.

...

Firey was a bit confused as to why Leafy had him doing all of these things all of a sudden but he didn't ask, he assumed she was stressed from work and he wanted to make her life easier so he just dealt with it.

He didn't mind looking after Grove, they were buddies and he was a pretty well-behaved kid so it wasn't too bad.

He wondered what Grove thought of him, did he see him as a role model or did he just see him as one of Leafy's friends who just so happened to live with them, either way Grove liked him so it didn't really matter all that much.

It was a late Saturday afternoon and Grove had been cooped up inside all day due to rain but when the sun came out he became antsy and kept asking if they could go to the park and play.

Leafy asked Firey to take him while she did some work for her job, Firey agreed though he hid his reluctance since he wasn't a fan of going out right after it had finished raining because of how wet everything still was.

Grove eagerly got ready and in a few minutes he stood by the door, jumping up and down in excitement with his welly boots on.

He held Firey's hand as they left and Leafy said goodbye to them.

Deep down, she was looking forward to telling him, she could tell he liked Grove and he'd probably love to call him his son.

She smiled to herself as she sat down to work.

She had a weird feeling that something was wrong but she ignored it, as much as she wanted to tell Firey, she was definitely nervous about it and that was probably all it was.

...

Grove played on the slide with another child who was similar in age to him and Firey watched him to make sure he didn't hurt himself on the slippery playground equipment.

After a while Grove came running over to Firey, asking him if he could take his hat off, Firey said he could and took it so it didn't get lost.

Grove gave him a quick hug and went off to play again, Firey smiled at him fondly.

"I'm so sorry but I just wanted to say you have such a gorgeous kid," he heard a voice say.

He looked to he left to see a woman who seemed to be in her mid-thirties, sitting at the bench beside him.

"Oh sorry, I'm the mother of the child he's playing with by the way," she added.

"Ah, he's uh, he's not mine," Firey said with a shrug.

"Huh...w-well, I'm terribly sorry for the mix up, you were getting along so well and he looks rather similar to you, I just assumed he was," she replied, clearly embarrassed.

"What? You think he looks like me?" Firey asked, bewildered.

"Oh yes, especially with the eyes and the freckles and from what I can see he has a similar grin to yours and you both just seem to understand each other like there's some kind of connection," she explained.

Suddenly, something in Firey's brain clicked and so many things began to make sense while so many things just became much harder to understand.

"Oh... okay," Firey said with no emotions.

"Again, I'm sorry for assuming, I just wanted to make some conversation, I hope I haven't made you uncomfortable," she apologised.

"It's fine," Firey replied.

The woman was still very embarrassed and she soon told her child they were going to leave.

The park was empty aside from Firey and Grove.

Firey stood up and walked over to Grove, carefully examining him, the small child looked up and flashed him a smile that was so similar to Leafy it was uncanny.

But there was something in his eyes, something about his tiny nose and even just the way his hair fluffed up just like his own did when he was a child.

Firey felt his stomach sink as he slowly realised the woman was right.

It was so obvious.

That's why Grove looked familiar the first time he met him, the flecks of orange and red in his eyes, the slight yellow tint to his hair, the freckles that dusted his face.

He was supposed to be an investigator, how the hell did he not realise?

"Grove, how old are you?"

Grove held up four fingers in response.

Firey was gone for just under five
years...

That's just enough time for Leafy to have...

"Grove, we're going home,"

Grove climbed down and began to walk alongside Firey, he was confused as to why he stopped being happy all of a sudden.

He tried to hold his hand but Firey quickly pulled it away.

Grove looked up at him in sad confusion and looked down at his feet as he held is own little hand to stop them feeling so cold.

She wouldn't have kept something like this from him right? Not when things were going so well.

This was something he had a right to know.

Firey walked into the apartment to find Leafy standing in the kitchen, brewing herself a coffee.

"Oh hey you two, you're back early, would you-"

Firey cut her off as he walked right up to her and asked in a deadly tone.

"Is that my kid?"

Leafy had been surprised by the sudden proximity and those words made her heart beat quickly, it took her a moment to collect herself.

"W-what do you mean?" she questioned.

"Is that my child!" he asked, his voice on the verge of yelling.

Leafy felt scared, he had backed her against the counter and the anger in his eyes was very clear.

Literally backed into a corner and with no way out, she admitted to everything.

"He is your kid, I-I'm sorry for not telling you, I just couldn't, not when you left all of a sudden all those years ago, I didn't know I'd you'd stay," she explained through tears.

"I couldn't put Grove through the pain I went through, I didn't want to tell you incase you bonded with him and you left again, I couldn't trust you,"

Firey stared at her in disbelief, he couldn't understand any of what was going on.

"He's my kid...and you weren't going to tell me?"

"No, I was! I was actually planning on telling you soon," she smiled nervously as she tried to reassure him.

"Oh and how can I believe that? If you couldn't trust me, why should I trust you?" He spat.

"No! Firey I-"

"You have no idea what I went through," Firey's voice began to get louder.

"I went through literal torture, trying to get back to you, I went through things that you couldn't possibly fathom, I've tried so hard to prove myself to you and it was never enough, was it ever going to be enough?"

"If I had known he was my kid I would have done so much more, I would have done so much better but you just couldn't let your guard down, not even around your husband,"

Leafy didn't want to hold his gaze but his eyes pierced into hers, she felt a tight sensation in her chest and she found it difficult to breathe.

"Seriously, give me one good reason as to why I couldn't be told about something I have a fucking right to know," he said as he narrowed his eyes.

"I think you just couldn't let go of your pride it's selfish, Leafy," he said with eerie calmness.

Leafy felt like a deer in headlights, unable to move or respond, she didn't know what to do, she looked at Firey with tear-filled eyes.

Until a small, sad sniffle from across the room finally brought her back to her senses.

She looked over at Grove who stood in the living room, hiding behind the door and something within her snapped.

No one makes Grove cry.

"How dare you call me selfish? I have worked my ass off to give that child a normal life and you expect that you can just waltz in and undo everything I did?" she countered, her expression changing to one of anger.

"I didn't tell you anything because I have no idea where you were for the last five years, how the hell was I supposed to know you weren't going to leave and hurt the thing I care about most?"

"I trusted you to never leave me and look where that got me, do you really expect me to let you potentially damage the one good thing in my life? You are so much stupider than you look," she snapped.

"I went through my pregnancy alone, I gave birth to that child with no one I loved around me, I have worked so hard since you left and you have the audacity to be mad at me?" she prodded him in sharply in the chest with her finger.

"I suffered so much because of you, you do not get to call me selfish, everything I went through was because of you!"

Firey glared at her and she glared right back.

"You aren't the only one that suffered Leafy, I did things that I will always regret with the hope of getting back to you even though staying in one place could possibly get me killed, I did everything because I loved you," he retorted.

"I went through hell and back with the goal of getting back to you, you have no idea how many sleepless nights, how many days I couldn't eat, how much shit I went through just because I wanted to be with you again," he said as tears pricked his eyes.

"You are not the only person who suffers, I suffered and I still am, I can't even describe how hurt I am right now," his voice broke slightly.

"I can't understand how you could act so loving toward me, knowing that you were keeping this from me, did you even once, consider how I would feel about it?" he questioned.

"Firey, I already told you, I needed to make sure Grove didn't go through what I went through," she insisted. "Right now, you're just acting like a child! You were fine a few hours ago,"

Firey recoiled, scowling at her as he took a step back.

"You don't fucking know if I'm fine," he said darkly.

"Ugh, my parents were right...how the hell did I fall for a man like you," Leafy said under her breath.

But Firey heard it, he heard it loud and clear.

She hadn't realised she said that out loud, she quickly covered her mouth with her hand and instantly felt regret when she saw Firey step back slight, his no longer angry but upset and hurt.

"Look Firey, I'm sorry can we please just-" Firey cut her off before she finished.

"I don't wanna hear it," he growled as he turned away and walked toward the front door.

"What are you doing?" she asked uncertainly.

"Leaving," he replied as he opened the door and stepped out into the hall and pressed the elevator call button as Leafy simply stood and stared until it arrived a few seconds later and he took a step inside.

He stood in the elevator and pushed the button to go down but Leafy stuck her foot in, preventing the door from closing.

"Firey, please stop being so immature and just come back into the apartment," she sighed in frustration.

"Oh, I'm being immature? Says the one literally not letting me leave," he snapped.

Her emotions were getting the better of her, everything was horriblly tense.

"If you let these doors close don't bother coming back," she yelled, slamming the side of her fist against the door of the elevator.

Firey was taken aback for a second but quickly composed himself, still keeping a pissed off expression and calmly said to her in a low tone.

"Don't worry, I wasn't planning on it,"

"Ugh, Firey please just-"

Without thinking Firey spoke.

"Maybe this time I actually will die, I'm sure that'll make things easier for you and that kid," he snapped.

...

Leafy was not emotionally prepared for that response.

She froze in place, staring at him in hurt and shock as his words sank in and she felt her blood run cold.

Firey knew that was too far, he couldn't look her in the eyes, he stepped forward, placing his hands on her shoulders and gently walked her out of the elevator and then got back in.

"I just wish you told me that things weren't okay,"

"But they can be," she said through tears.

Firey tried to stand tall, he tried to be strong but he just couldn't, it was too hard.

"No, they can't, not anymore " he sighed shakily.

He pressed the button again and slowly but surely, those horrible metal doors closed.

Leafy's mouth hung open slightly as years streamed down her face and sobs came from her mouth.

She stared at the grey metal, her arms folded tightly against her chest as her cries echoed off the walls.

She had no idea how long she stood there for, her shoulders shaking with each sob as she slowly sank to the ground, her legs no longer able to bare her weight any more.

Just as quickly as Firey had returned, he was gone.

After some time, Grove walked out to her and stood in front of her, completely in the dark about what to do.

He put his hand on her shoulder and Leafy looked up, still crying but she did her best to smile for him.

"Please don't cry mama," he whispered as he hugged her.

"I'm not crying Grovey, there's just some dust in my eyes," she said.

"Lies are bad mama," Grove told her.

"I'm sorry baby, I'm a little upset but you're really helping me," she said as she hugged him tightly.

Grove hugged his mother, trying to look after her the same way she looked after him, he rubbed her back and told her things would be okay.

"I don't like Firey, he's mean," Grove grumbled.

"No, no don't say that, he's a good guy, mama just... didn't say what

she needed to say," Leafy sighed.

"He made you cry, I don't like him," Grove insisted.

Leafy didn't respond, she picked Grove up, holding him close to her and walked inside, locking the door behind her.

She sat on the couch with him in her arms, rocking him gently until he fell asleep, it was far too late for her little guy to be awake and this was far too much for him to deal with.

She stayed awake for hours after that, replaying everything in her mind, regretting every bit of it.

All of this could have been avoided if she had told him everything right at the start.

God, she was so stupid.

And now she was paying the price for it.

She was too late and now she had lost him for good.

Resting her head against Grove's, she silently cried in her apartment that suddenly felt much too quiet.

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Chapter 26

The cold air of the night stabbed Firey like a blade and he quickly crossed his arms over his chest to try fend it off a bit.

He trudged down the street with absolutely no idea of where or what he was supposed to do or go.

With a few words he lost everything.

It rained softly as the sky became darker and Firey knew he wouldn't find anywhere dry to sleep.

He had already ruined himself in two people's eyes, who cares if he lost even more dignity.

He took out his phone and rang someone for a favour he never thought he'd need.

"Hey Four, I need some help,"

Firey told him everything. Well, almost everything.

He left out how bad the fight was but he knew Four would figure it out based on his voice.

"Alright fine, I guess I do owe you something for your work, I have a guest room you can stay in," Four said tiredly, it was obvious he had been rudely woken.

"Thanks Four, don't worry it's not going to be permanent," Firey assured.

He ended the call and continued his long walk to the outskirts of the city, he was cold and the rain got into his eyes but he needed to keep moving.

After about an hour of walking, he couldn't stop himself anymore and reached into his pocket and pulled out his pack of cigarettes.

Once he had lit it, he stared up at the sky where he could see the moon shining through the clouds as he tainted the clear air with his smoke when he exhaled.

He never liked smoking but it seemed to still his nerves and stopped him from being jumpy or fidgety, he often wondered how much of it was actually helping and how much of it was just him lying to himself.

...

The rest of the walk took him hours, by the time he got to Four's house, it was almost midnight and his muscles were sore.

Four let him in but paused for a moment when he saw the state Firey was in.

He caught a glimpse of himself in the mirror and realised that Four's reaction was totally justified.

His hair was a mess, it was obvious he had been crying, he was soaked to the skin, his clothes were crumpled and scuffed and he smelled like cigarette smoke.

"There's a bath down the hall, please take one before you sit on anything," Four yawned.

Firey nodded in response as Four showed him where his room was and then left.

The room was nice, a decent size with a comfy looking bed, a desk and a wardrobe. There was a carpet in the center of the room and there was a vase of flowers on a bedside table, it was rather cute, very unlike Four.

He hung his jacket up and then went down the hall to wash himself.

The bath took a while to fill and the room steamed up, Firey wiped the mirror with his hand and scrutinised the reflection he saw in it.

"You ruined everything," he told himself.

"You had one good thing in your life and you ruined it,"

He carefully got into the bath and sank into the warm water and let himself soak for a moment.

He washed his hair and attempted to get any grit off his skin, his muscles relaxed in the warm embrace of the water and Firey felt himself growing drowsy.

He gazed up at the ceiling as he lay back in the water, memories of Leafy rushed to his mind.

She was so pretty, she was so kind, she was so sweet and so gentle.

She deserved so much better than him.

He remembered times when he held her close and they whispered sweet nothings to each other, completely in love with the other.

He remembered times when he kissed her, in particular their first kiss.

They were sixteen and it had rained non-stop while they were leaving school, they walked home together but the rain was too heavy to keep going so they stopped under a bridge.

Leafy had seen a cat up ahead and shoved her bag into Firey's hands and ran toward it, despite the heavy rain and the hail that fell.

Just as she reached the cat, she slipped on the wet concrete, hurting her ankle and scaring the cat off.

Firey quickly dropped the bags and ran over to her, he hated the rain but he didn't care in that moment, he wanted to make sure Leafy was alright.

Leafy was crying, she was upset that the cat had run away and she was in pain, Firey helped her up, using himself a crutch so she could walk.

He scolded her for running after the cat and asked her what the hell she was thinking.

She was still upset and Firey sighed in frustration, there was no point in complaining, besides, he wasn't even mad, he just worried about her.

He took off his jacket and put it over her shoulders and they waited under the bridge for the rain to stop, Firey did his best to cheer her up and it worked and soon she was laughing again.

Even when the rain died down and the sun came out they were both still soaked but Leafy said her ankle felt better.

Firey helped her up, offering his hand that Leafy took.

She stood in front of him for a moment as Firey picked up his things and began to walk towards his home.

She told him to stop and close his eyes, Firey was confused and didn't do it straight away but Leafy was insistant.

He closed his eyes and suddenly felt soft lips come into contact with his own.

It lasted for around five seconds before she pulled away, a small blush tinting her cheeks as she held her hands behind her back and grinned at him while giggling.

Firey stared at her in shock, totally surprised and unable to speak except for a stupid "huh" sound.

"See you tomorrow!" she said happily as she quickly turned and ran.

And that was the first of many kisses they would share.

He would never kiss her again.

He would never hold her again.

He would never have her again.

He felt empty, there was nothing in his thoughts, he felt lonely yet strangely comforted.

He felt a pressure in his chest that gradually because more and more

painful.

He had sank below the water, the sudden realisation of what he was doing struck him and he quickly forced himself into an upright position and out of the water.

He coughed and spluttered as he tried to get the water out of his throat, he sat for a while taking deep breaths, shocked by his behavior.

It was not a good idea for him to he in a body of water right now.

He carefully got out, dried himself off and put on the spare clothes Four had given him, a pair of black sweatpants and a red football jersey, tacky but he wasn't about to complain.

He went back to the room he would be sleeping in and lay on the bed, the clock on the wall said it was one in the morning, he was so tired he couldn't sleep.

So he cried.

In one day he had destroyed his relationship with Leafy and his own son who he didn't even know was his, god his life was relentless.

He had overreacted and here he was in a random bed feeling cold, alone and in slight pain due to almost drowning himself.

He did his best to keep his sobs quiet, he didn't want Four to hear him and ask questions.

He clutched his pillow close to him, burying his face in it as he wept, his tears were going to leave stains but he completely disregarded that.

Soon the tears stopped falling and he just held the pillow tightly, staring into space, he barely noticed the light from the hall as the bedroom door opened.

Four walked in looking extremely sleep deprived but ever so slightly sympathetic, they walked into the room and placed a small tray on the bedside table.

"You should eat something, it'll help you sleep," they said simply.

Firey turned and looked at the blue haired person, their eyes contained no judgement, no pity, just worry for their comrade.

"Thank you," Firey said.

Four nodded as they left the room, stopping as they got to the door and they put their hand into Firey's jacket pocket and pulled out the box of cigarettes.

"Don't use these to deal with your problems, the damage isn't worth it," the sighed.

Firey said nothing as they took the box and told him they were going to put them somewhere out of his reach.

Four gently closed the door behind them and Firey sat in darkness again.

He turned onto his back and began to sink back into his own thoughts.

It all needed to end, this whole fucked up mess needed to end.

But the end needed to have a meaning, it needed to be worth it.

He can't be selfish anymore.

...

Firey woke up the next day at around noon but he was still tired when he walked downstairs to look for Four.

Four's house was big and Firey got lost multiple times before he found Four in their office looking over some papers.

"Four, I want to talk to you," Firey said with as much authority has he could muster.

"What is it," Four sighed, adjusting their glasses.

"How close are we to ending this case, be honest with me,"

"We're fairly close, like I've told you there's just a few more people to take down but if we can get rid of Two, then they'll all disappear,"

"How can we do that? Is there some kind of squad we can set up?"

"No Firey, it's too dangerous, Two has uncanny abilities and somehow constantly knows when we're on their track, everytime we send people after them they never come back,"

Four rested their head against their hands we they watched Firey suspiciously.

"In short Firey, there's not much we can do right now,"

Firey walked into the office and took a seat across from Four, his eyes were dull and lacked life.

"I know a way we can take them out," Firey announced.

"And how is that?" Four questioned.

Firey pulled a file out from the inside of his jacket and threw it down onto the desk, the front of it was labelled "Plan X"

Four glared at the file as they picked it up and looked through it.

"Firey, how many photos and notes have you taken from the Investigation Room?" Four grumbled.

"Just keep reading," Firey replied.

As Four turned each page their expression became graver and more concerned, as they reached the last few pages of notes and information, their face was one of worry and horror.

"Firey... this is," they couldn't even begin to articulate what they were thinking.

"Four, just give me the all clear, I can do this without the agency, all I need is for you to agree," Firey insisted.

"No Firey, I can't, I-" Four struggled to say anything coherent.

"I've had this on a back burner in case anything went wrong and in my eyes, all of this is wrong, it's gone on longer that it needs to," Firey said.

"I can do this Four, I just need some equipment and I can do it, it'll all be over," Firey had a borderline insane look in his eyes.

"But, this is... it's a..." Four stammered.

"I know what it is, Four,"

"It's a suicide mission,"

"I've given everything up for this case, what difference does this make?"

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Chapter 27

Leafy was not herself.

From the moment those doors closed she emotionally shut down to everything around her except for Grove.

She couldn't do that to him, she needed to be strong, she needed to be a good mother, she couldn't make him suffer because she isn't as emotionally mature as she thought.

She was mad at Firey for leaving and even more so for making Grove cry.

But she was also mad at herself for not telling him sooner, if she just communicated better it all wouldn't have happened and they could have been a real family.

But Firey didn't communicate with her either, he kept secrets from her and he still somehow couldn't see how much he hurt her when he left, if anything he was being selfish.

After what he had done she thought she was justified in not trusting him, how can she expect him to stay when he broke her heart so long ago?

In the end it didn't matter though, did it?

Firey and Grove still bonded and now Grove was upset that someone he had grown to like was gone.

She had wanted to protect Grove and she had failed, the last thing she wanted to upset her own child.

She felt horrible, all of this was just too sad and she just wanted to rest in bed with Grove and pretend that everything was okay.

But she couldn't, she needed to keep going, for Grove.

She forced herself out of bed to go work everyday and take Grove to school, she needed a routine.

She worked harder than ever, using her time in work to distract herself from how lonely she was when she went home and Grove was asleep.

Her behavior didn't go unnoticed, her boss praised her new attitude toward her job and said he wished that more employees were like her.

All of her Co-workers admired her already but lately their admiration sky rocketed, they all agreed that she was reliable and a great person to be on good terms with, she was always so willing to help whenever she could.

Despite all of this, one person didn't like her way of doing things and was extremely worried about her.

"Leafy, I'll take this work for today, you go home and rest," Gelatin said as he took a pen out of Leafy's hand.

"No, I can keep doing it, don't worry," Leafy assured.

Gelatin knew what had happened, the day after it happened Leafy called him, extremely upset and told him everything.

To say he was pissed off at Firey would be a massive understatement.

It was just like what happened last time and he was watching Leafy become a shell of what she used to be.

Thankfully, Gelatin had some influence within the company and if Leafy wouldn't listen to him about taking a break, there was one person she had to agree with.

...

While Leafy was looking over some statistics from the company's last event, she got an email from her boss.

The email was kindly worded and as she read further, it showed that her boss was offering her a week's vacation because of how much work she had done.

Immediately, she knew it was Gelatin who was behind this, how convient it was that he also had to leave early today.

She knew she had to take the offer or else Gelatin wouldn't leave her alone, she typed out an email accepting the week off and it was arranged that her week off would start on Monday.

...

"Gelatin, you sly bitch," she snapped as she called Gelatin on the phone.

"Leafster, you need the rest, literally everyone is talking about how hard you're working and I just don't think it's good for you,"

"But it distracts me, I don't want to have nothing to do,"

"You can take care of yourself and get some sleep, I can tell you haven't been doing that lately,"

"You motherfucker, I'll -"

"Get some rest, see ya, bye bye," Gelatin sang as he ended the call.

Leafy grumbled as she sank into her couch and placed her hand on the side of her head, she felt a headache coming.

...

And so her time of "rest" began.

And she hated it.

How the hell did Gelatin think he knew what was best for her? She worked to stop having to confront the pain she would have to face one day.

It was Saturday evening and she was enjoying a peaceful dinner with

Grove, he wasn't as chatty as usual but he was still telling her about random things that came to his little mind.

She smiled at him as he kicked his legs and ate the dinner she made but she knew he wasn't totally happy.

He was sad ever since Firey left but since he was still young he didn't understand what was going on, he was just a bit down but he'd be fine in about a week when it would all just be like a bad, hazy memory.

Deep down, she was glad that he was so young and didn't get the concept of "parents" yet.

And she was glad that Firey hadn't figured this out sooner, it just made it hurt a little bit less.

Maybe it hurt him a little less too but she doubted that, news like this wouldn't just settle easily.

Where was he right now?

She thought of everywhere he might be, everything he might be doing.

She felt saddened that none of it involved her.

What if they had just spoken like normal people instead of immediately fighting? Could they have had a life together?

A life with their child?

From what she had seen, he would have been a good dad, he was fun, he cared about Grove but also knew when to put his foot down.

What could have been if she had just taken a moment to breathe?

She sighed as she picked up her plate and Grove's to wash them.

She felt tired and it was nearing Grove's bedtime, after taking him to the bathroom and helping him brush his teeth and then carried him up the stairs.

She sat beside him after she tucked him in and gently stroked his head.

"Mama, when is Firey coming back?" he yawned.

Leafy paused for a moment, looking at his bright, innocent eyes.

"Firey isn't coming back, baby, he's gone," she sighed.

"Will he still get me from school?" he asked as he stared at him mother.

"No, I don't know if we'll see him again, I don't know where he is," she explained.

"Oh," he said sadly.

"I'd like to see him again,"

"Me too, Grovey,"

Grove mumbled about playgrounds and trains as he slowly drifted off to sleep.

Leafy caught a glance at his eyes just before they closed, the flecks of orange and yellow stood out strongly in the glow of his night-light, she gently caressed his face as she gazed at her son.

He looked so similar to him, especially the eyes but right now he was quite clearly Firey's son.

Although Grove looked more like Leafy there were moments when he looked like Firey and he also acted like him.

Firey was a lot more relaxed than Leafy was, he was a lot less confrontational and preferred to avoid fights and hide from them, he was able to control his temper whereas Leafy easily flared.

"I think you got the best of both of us," she smiled.

She kissed his goodnight and quietly left the room.

She walked into her own bedroom and lay in her bed, it felt bigger

and colder than she remembered it before Firey came back.

She placed her hand where Firey would sleep and took his pillow.

It still smelled like him.

She rolled into her back and glared at the ceiling, everything was so big, so dark and so confusing, why couldnt they just be simple?

Grove would be at school from Monday to Friday, this was how it would be while she was here, lonely.

She groaned as she figured out that this would be a long, quiet night followed by a long, boring week.

She pulled the sheets over her head to block out the life around her and hide away for a while.

...

There was no one on the street.

Aside from a tall person who wore an expensive looking suit.

"Well well well Nickel, it appears that we've had a bit of a change of plans,"

They let out a small, sinister chuckle as they walked away from the apartment complex, typing something onto a phone.

"But it's like I always say, isn't it?"

"Good things come to those who wait,"

= = = =

stories better.

I hope you enjoyed that chapter.

XOXO
LeafCake

Chapter 28

Firey was sat in Four's large living room, both of them were drunk after raiding Four's alcohol storage.

Seeing Four drunk was a strange sight for Firey but he couldn't say much, he also wasn't very classy when he downed a couple beers.

Four had given their approval for Firey's mission and they began planning it properly that day, they worked their asses off to get it on track to bring fail proof and this was their "reward".

In truth, it was just a sad day for both of them and neither was good at articulating their emotions.

"Firey, I-I want you to kill that B-bastard," Four's words slurred together.

"No, D-don't worry, I'll do it... he'll... he'll die," Firey responded.

Four put their hand on Firey's shoulder to steady themself as their eyes suddenly began to water.

"Oh god Firey, I loved them," Four sobbed.

"W-who?" Firey questioned.

"X, I loved them and I never said it." Four rested their head against the table, totally slumped.

"I never told them... and I always knew they were too good for me but I-I always thought they'd be here,"

Firey watched Four cry, a sad, ugly sound that he didn't want to hear, it just felt wrong.

"I loved them," Four cried, muffled from having his face pressed on

the table.

Firey narrowed his eyes and scrutinised the situation.

Why the hell was everything in his life just sad?

...

Needless to say, both of them were hungover the next day and Firey woke up on the floor of the living room with Four still laying on the table, the room was a mess.

Firey shook Four awake, getting a smack and a half uttered complaint, he decided not to try further and just brought the cans and bottles out to the bins.

The sun was too bright and the sound of the leaves and the birds was too loud for him, it made his head pound.

He went to the kitchen to brew some coffee for himself and Four, while he waited for it to brew, he ate a bowl of cereal, the pure picture of high-class charm.

He brought the coffee into the living room and properly shook Four awake, placing the coffee in front of them.

After a few minutes, Four sat up and chugged the coffee and was miraculously good as new.

"Thank you cleaning up Firey, apologies for anything I may have said last night, I was not myself as you could probably tell," Four said with hidden embarrassment.

"It's fine, you didn't say anything bad," Firey assured.

Four didn't believe him but pretended that they did, they left to go take a shower and after that they got back to work on the plan.

Once again, they worked for hours on end, trying to figure out locations, ways to coax Two out of hiding and methods of killing.

It was daunting for Firey but he said nothing, he needed to go

through with this no matter how scared he was.

Planning your own death wasn't fun.

It would be worth it as long as it worked, this case would be closed and people would be safe.

Leafy would be able to move on.

He wondered who would tell her he was dead, he wondered if she would actually believe them.

Maybe it's like The Boy Who Cried Wolf...

Suddenly, the two were disrupted from their work by Four's doorbell ringing.

Four checked the cameras and pressed a button to let the person in.

"Who is it?" Firey asked.

"Another agent, don't worry," Four responded.

They walked out to the main hall to greet the agent, wondering what they wanted.

Firey was surprised to see Tree standing there but considering how his life was lately, why should anything surprise him?

"Hey Tree, what's up?" Firey greeted.

"Don't *what's up* me, you lunatic!" Tree yelled, clearly pissed off.

"Calm down, Agent, what's wrong?" Four asked with an authoritative tone.

"What's wrong? **What's wrong?!**" Tree was full of contempt and frustration.

"What's wrong is that you're letting this idiot kill himself for no reason!"

"Tree relax, this plan is going to work, it'll end this stupid case once

and for all," Firey tried to reason.

"No, no, no there are so many other ways to do this, this is not one of them!" Tree shook Firey's shoulders violently.

"I don't know what the hell is going through your head but I know damn well that this is just plain insanity!"

"I have nothing left Tree, there's no point for me to keep living," Firey retorted.

"Leafy told me everything you idiot, I contacted her after I heard what you were trying to do, you can't just leave her like that again,"

"But this time I'll actually be dead, she won't ever have to worry about me coming back again, she can live her life!"

"You have a son you stupid twat, are you really going to die after learning that you actually do have a reason to keep going?"

"You can't just leave Leafy with Grove, when you know full well he's your kid too, it's so selfish,"

"You aren't doing something nobel, you aren't doing this to save people, you're doing this because you're a coward who can't face his problems and now you're taking the extreme way out and trying to make yourself feel better by justifying it,"

Firey trembled as he felt a rage build up.

"Shut up, shut up! You have no idea why I'm doing, don't dissect it like you know what's going through my head," Firey snapped as he shoved Tree away.

"You don't know what's in my head, you have no idea what my life is like, I just through shit and it never ends up being worth it, let me do what I need to do!"

"Firey, stop acting like a child, as a matter of fact, I **do** know what's going through your head and it's insane, I'm not going to let you die when you have a good life waiting for you if you just made some good choices and actually spoke to people," Tree exclaimed as.

"You just don't get it, I *don't* have a good life waiting for me, I've been telling myself that I'm doing all of this to *get* a good life and look where I am," Firey gestured to himself as tears formed in the corner of his eyes.

"Firey, I do understand, I promise I do, I threw away a good life with the people I love and now I have no one and the only person I do have has given up on me, what you're doing is just a stupid version of what I did," Tree said in a calmer tone.

"Firey, I want you to stop and think for a moment about what this will mean, you're just hurting people, this isn't what you really want," Tree tried to reason.

Firey stopped for a moment, forcing himself not to cry in front of the two people standing there.

"Tree, I have thought about it, I've thought about it for a long time," Firey sighed.

"This is what I want, Tree, there's no point for me to keep trying,"

Tree's expression saddened and from the corner of his eye Firey saw Four with a worried look on his face, Firey felt ashamed.

"I don't... like being alive, my thoughts are sad, my days are sad, everything around me is sad, everyday just repeats over and over, I don't want to keep doing it," Firey sighed.

"There's really nothing going for me now, maybe I *had* Leafy and Grove but I burnt that bridge and I don't think she would want to try fix it,"

"Just let me do this Tree, please,"

Tree looked at him with hatred and pity, Firey looked away, unable to hold his gaze.

"Can you stay here for a minute?" Firey asked as he walked to the guest room.

Firey walked upstairs and went to the bedside table, opening the

bottom drawer and taking out an envelope with Leafy's name on it.

He got downstairs and walked up to Tree, holding out the envelope for him to take.

"I want you to give this to Leafy when you find out I'm dead, only do it when you're certain that I'm dead," Firey requested.

"No, you can give it to her yourself, you're gonna make it out of this alive," Tree insisted.

They looked at each other, Tree would never forget the sad, broken look in Firey's eyes or the tears that he was trying so hard to hide.

Tree knew he didn't actually want this.

Tree sighed deeply as he took the letter from Firey's hand, placing it carefully in his pocket.

"Thank you, Tree," Firey smiled wanly.

"I still think you're being selfish," Tree muttered as he turned and left.

"I think I agree, Tree,"

Firey watched as he walked down the steps of the porch and got into his car, Tree didn't look back at Firey once but Firey knew there was a mutual understanding and a mutual dislike between them.

But he also knew that they had a bond that would remain forever unspoken, a bond formed by mutual hurt, suffering and loneliness.

Firey knew Tree would give Leafy the note, despite his lamenting about him being selfish, he trusted him and would fulfil his request.

Tree was a good person.

Firey was not.

= = = =

I've got you brother, I've got you brother.

I hope you liked that chapter.

XOXO
LeafCake

Chapter 29

Two weeks since she reverted back to what she was when he died.

Two weeks since the only person she had ever loved left her.

Two weeks.

In that time she became numb, unresponsive to everyone except her son.

Gelatin came over to visit her, trying his best to get a genuine smile and laugh out of her, talking about stories from when they were kids and telling her random, embarrassing stories about himself and their friends but nothing worked like it usually did.

Of course, she responded to him, giving him smiles and laughs and questions in reply but Gelatin knew they were fake, he knew what a real smile looked like, he knew what Leafy's smile was like and that wasn't it.

When Gelatin wasn't there, other people were.

Pin came over and did a spa session with Leafy, it felt good but only physically.

Golfball came over and tried to talk to her, even inviting her to her and Tennisball's beach house but it didn't do much, Leafy declined the offer.

Tennisball gave her some fresh tea herbs he grew in his garden, Flower had made her some clothes, putting aside deadlines for her friend and Lollipop sent over an expensive white wine.

People were doing so much for her.

She appreciated it greatly but no matter how hard she tried she

couldn't deal with the idea that Firey didn't love her anymore.

Her own husband didn't love her.

She had run out of tears to cry and simply lay on the sofa, staring at nothing as the TV blared in the background.

It was Saturday afternoon, Coiny and Pin had taken Grove to a themepark to try distract him too because he was still pretty upset too.

Leafy hated being sad infront of Grove, she needed to try get better for his sake.

But today was not that day, she was resting, she wore low-rise tracksuit bottoms and a hoodie over a crop top, both of them has drink company logos on them, not her most flattering outfit by any means.

She threw a stress ball up and down, there was nothing on her mind, her focus was on the ball.

Throw, catch.

Throw, catch.

Throw, catch, click.

Her attention turned to her front door when she heard it unlock, she felt her stomach drop when she heard it open.

She quickly stood up, bracing herself for whoever it was, she wasn't going to let this thief take anything.

The intruder rounded the corner and Leafy was taken aback when she saw it was the person from the coffee shop who gave her the business card.

This person had something to do with Firey, what was their name?

"How lovely it is to see you again, Leafy," they grinned as they bobbed a curtsey.

"You're Two, right? What in the name of God are you doing in my apartment?" she demanded.

"I am simply here to see how things are going for you," they said with that horrible smile still lighting their face.

"Get out, **now,"** Leafy snarled, taking out her phone to call the police.

Suddenly, Two strode over to her, grasping her hand with horrific strength causing her to yell in pain and drop her phone which Two promptly kicked to the other side of the room.

Two let go of her wrist, Leafy recoiled in pain, holding her hand tenderly, she was certain it was broken.

"Now Leafy, we're both adults, we don't need other people to solve our problems, right?" Two taunted.

"You bastard, I think you broke my wrist," she yelled accusingly.

"Calm down, I'm sure it's not that bad, now as I was saying-" Two was cut of by Leafy throwing a swift punch, right in his face.

"I said, get out," she ordered in a dark tone, poised for another attack.

"My, my, what a temper," Two sighed, wincing slightly as he touched his cheek.

Two raised his hand to strike her back but Leafy caught it, struggling against his strength for a moment until he let go.

Leafy lunged at him, completely wild and void of care, she swung her fists, grabbing at his ugly hair, letting out a fierce yell as she did so.

Two reacted quickly but definitely caught off guard, Leafy was stronger than he had anticipated and she was clearly not going to care if she did any serious damage.

Two began to worry that Leafy would overpower him but he had a trick up their sleeve.

As Leafy lunged for her next attack, ready to sink her nails into his

face, Two stopped her with hard punch to her cheek and a swift kick to her chest she stumbled as she was suddenly winded and tried her best to breathe.

Making the most of her confusion, Two quickly grabbed her, holding her close to him in a grip that she couldn't get out of even in her rage-filled state.

Using a free hand, Two held a soft cloth to her nose and mouth as Leafy's let out screams and yells for help that only came out muffled as she kicked and struggled in attempts to escape.

She found herself growing dizzy and drowsy and her world began to spin as her eyes slowly closed, all she could hear was Two talking to her.

"Shhh,just stay calm and it'll be over soon, just behave and all will work out," they said in a fake-soothing tone.

"It's not you I want to hurt,"

Leafy's screams grew weaker as her body felt heavy and she went limp in Two's arms, she couldn't get out, she was falling asleep.

"Hush now, it's all okay, you'll be just fine,"

Those were the last words she heard before everything went dark.

...

She briefly woke up, it was pitch dark and she couldn't see a thing but she could feel that she was in a van of some kind and it was moving.

She stayed still, not wanting to bring any attention to herself.

However she didn't stay awake for long as she soon felt the darkness fully engulf her once more.

Please... someone, anyone... please.

Firey...

She wanted Firey, she wanted to be told everything was just a dream, she wanted to wake up in his arms and feel his warm kiss on her lips.

Firey...

...

She didn't get what she wanted.

She finally woke up, properly this time.

But to her horror, her hands were tied behind her back and she was sat on the floor, against a cold metal pole.

Everything was cold, even the blood that dripped from her mouth as grown cold.

She was in a dimly lit warehouse, shivering from fear and cold.

As her vision adjusted to the harshness of it all, she could make out a green haired figure on the other side of the warehouse.

She squinted her eyes to see who it was.

It was Two, who had turned to face her, seeing that she could now tell who they were, they sent her a cold, sinister smirk as they exited the warehouse, turning off all the lights as they did so.

Tears formed in her eyes and rolled down her cheeks, no sound came from her as she simply stared into the darkness.

Completely alone.

With no one to save her.

Cold.

So cold.

...

Darkness.

= = = =

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Sorry, couldn't think of song lyrics for this one guys.

Hope you enjoyed this chapter.

XOXO
LeafCake

Chapter 30

It was so cold, every inch of her body felt cold.

The skin on her wrists had rubbed raw after hours of struggling, everytime she made even the slightest moved it stung.

The chair she sat on was not comfortable at all, it was like a chair you would see in a school, it made her back and shoulders hurt like hell.

The sweat that dripped from her was cold but she couldn't even tell if it was sweat or not since this place was so damp.

She had stopped crying and screaming for help hours ago, no one was going to hear her so she gave up.

She had no idea how long it had been since she had been taken from her home, she had been knocked unconscious for an unknown amount of time.

She needed to do her best to stay calm, she needed to make sure she didn't just give up completely, she had a son to get back to, one thing was certain...

She wasn't going out without a fight.

To pass the time, she counted the beams on the roof, trying to guess what they were made of and trying to imagine what kind of animals scurried along it.

She was counting the bolts in each beam when the door on the other side of the warehouse opened.

The green bastard who had taken her here smiled at her as he walked over.

"Glad to see that you aren't hysterical anymore," he chirped.

Leafy gave no response, keeping a hateful glare on her face.

"Oh come now, don't be like that, I have questions that I need answers to, your help would be greatly appreciated," he smiled.

Still, Leafy gave no reply.

Two sighed as they shook their head, tutting as though they were talking to a young child.

"Tell me, where is Firey Brennt?"

Leafy turned her head sharply, her nose turned upwards in a snobby fashion, she wasn't going to play along with this charade.

Two was not having any of it, with their signature smile on their face, they grabbed Leafy's jaw in one hand, squeezing tightly, his nails digging into her skin.

"Where is Firey Brennt?"

Leafy winced at the pain as the pressure increased, terrified that her jaw would break.

"I... don't know," she managed she utter.

Two realised their grip, lowering their hand back to their side as they raised an eyebrow, they still smiled.

"You don't know, huh?" he said as he shook is head in mock disappointment.

"I feel bad for you Leafy, I really do," the green haired man sighed.

"Huh?"

"You mourned that bastard for years, remained loyal and even welcomed him into your arms when he returned unannounced, you were always much better than he deserved and yet... he simply left,"

Leafy stared at the insane person in front of her, her eyes full of

horror as they continued.

"He claims to love you but... where is he now? Probably off somewhere drinking, with total disregard for you or your wellbeing, I mean, with all of his *amazing* investigation skills, he would be able to find you if he wanted to," they said, laughing slightly.

Leafy's eyes brimmed with tears as she felt her chest tighten, her breathing grew heavy as she attempted to control it, each breath was shakey and painful.

Two leaned toward her, lowering himself so he was at eye level with her, the green in his eyes felt like daggers penetrating her as he smiled a poisonous smile, like he got some sick joy seeing her suffer.

"Maybe he got sick of you and that's why he isn't coming to save you, maybe it was all a lie,"

"Maybe he never even loved you to begin with"

Tears rolled down her cheeks as she shook, in that moment she had never been filled with more hatred.

She lunged forward but was yanked back by the ropes that bound her in place but she continued to attempt to break free, ignoring the pain that shot through her skin.

She yelled at the top of her lungs, a sad, broken sound than any normal person would have felt sympathetic towards.

Two simply chuckled slightly, ever smiling.

"You're a sick freak, burn in hell you absolute monster!"

Leafy attempted to kick as she continued screaming.

"I'll kill you, you sick bastard I'll kill you!"

"You're a coward, you're a sick, twisted coward!"

Two mocked her pathetic attempts at threatening him, moving closer ever so slightly, so sure of himself and his highground.

He was so close.

And she wasn't entirely restrained...

Using all of her strength, Leafy brought her head back, then quickly forward, smashing her head into Two's mocking face.

...

She had hit so hard even she was a little dazed.

Two recoiled, doubled over as he held his face in his hands, when he looked up at her, he was no longer smiling.

Blood streamed from his nose and mouth as a scarily enraged look burned in his eyes.

After taking a moment to collect themself, Two straightened up and strode to Leafy and kicked her harshly in the stomach.

The leg of the chair she sat on gave way when the extra weight suddenly put pressure on it and Leafy fell onto the cold, concrete floor.

The dull pain where Two had kicked her made her feel like she would be sick, she willed herself not to throw up.

She curled up slightly, an attempt at nulling the pain that only made it worse as Two looked down her with a look of disgust.

"I hope I won't have to do that again, it would be a shame to damage such a pretty face," Two said in a sinister tone.

Leafy remained silent, shivering and refusing to look up at Two as they turned and walked away and out of the door.

She had fallen into a puddle of dirty water, she was in pain and she was freezing.

She wanted to cry but to her surprise, she just couldn't.

Nothing came out when she tried to, she drew a shaken breath as let

her muscles loosen and she lay on the ground.

"Firey... please... where are you?"

...

Leafy became numb to everything around her, only being taken from her idle state when she heard that horrible door creak.

She was surprised to see it wasn't Two walking over to her this time but rather a much smaller man, with short silver hair and a large black coat.

He stopped once he was in front of Leafy, or rather, once Leafy was at his feet.

She glared slightly as she stared up at this stranger, bracing herself or any kind of attack.

The grey eyed man lifted her carefully, positioning her so her back was against the pole she was tied to and she was sitting upright.

She eyed him suspiciously as he gave her an awkward, apologetic look.

"I'm sorry you got dragged into all of this," he said quietly.

"All of what? Who are you?" Leafy questioned in a quick, angry tone.

"My name is Nickel, I guess I'm Two's assistant," he said, slightly unsure of his answer.

"Why are you here?" she asked.

"I feel bad," he said as he looked away from her.

He dug through his pocket and pulled out a slightly crushed sandwich and a small bottle of water.

Leafy moved back as much as she could, moving her face away from him.

"Are you trying to poison me?" she accused.

"No, of course not! I'm trying to help you," he defended.

"I don't like what Two does, the only reason I work for him is because my family has been involved in crime for years, I hate the fact that you're being brought into all of this, you shouldn't have to deal with it,"

Nickel unwrapped the sandwich and held it out to her.

"You've been here for over twenty-four hours, you need to eat," he pleaded.

Leafy was hungry, she stared at Nickel, trying to read into his words and expression, searching for any hidden meaning.

Although the sandwich was crushed and was made of limp, white bread and had simply ham and cheese inside, it looked like the best thing she had seen in ages.

She quickly took a small bite, testing to make sure there was no fast acting poison or drug.

It tasted fine...

Due to her hands being behind her, she couldn't hold the sandwich herself and her only option was to basically eat from Nickels hand, he crouched down so it was easier for her to eat.

The thing was gone in just over a minute and it tasted better than she would have ever imagined, it was amazing what happened when you were hungry.

Nickel opened the water bottle and held it to her mouth, tilting it slightly so she could drink.

And much like the sandwich, the water was gone just like that.

An awkward silence filled the air as Leafy stared at Nickel, unsure of what to make of him.

"I'll try bring you food if I can, it won't be much though," he said.

"Thank you," she replied uncertainly.

"Please don't tell Two,"

"I won't,"

Nickel stood up but stayed by Leafy hesitating for a bit.

"I really am sorry, I mean it, I wish I could help you,"

A short, empty, emotionless laugh came from Leafy's lips and she looked Nickel dead in the eyes.

"I appreciate the sentiment but sorry can't do much for me, can it?"

Nickel nodded, slightly ashamed.

Leafy sighed as she saw the genuine remorse on his face and she softened slightly.

"But, it's reassuring to know there's someone I can put a bit of hope in,"

Nickels depressed expression was replaced by a small, tired smile as he waved goodbye slightly and walked away, leaving her alone again.

With nothing better to do, Leafy went back to counting the bolts but she had a newfound feeling of energy, not enough to escape but enough to be able to forget the pain that coursed through her body, even for a short amount of time.

In that moment, she realised that even the smallest act of kindness could be nothing short of a miracle worker.

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Hope you enjoyed that chapter.
XOXO
LeafCake

Chapter 31

Firey was living out his "final days".

Final days, huh?

It was such a funny thought to him that this was where his life took him and the idea that it would all end in such a short amount of time.

Hell, Four had even started being a lot nicer and wouldn't shut up about all the good work Firey had done.

He wished that he could say he did something meaningful with the time he had left but unfortunately, that would be a lie.

The truth was he spent most of his time finalising the plan or drinking.

He would have smoked but Four had taken away his pack and he hasn't gone anywhere except for the flowerbeds in Four's back garden when he helped Four tend to them.

And so, Firey was sat on a chair in the back-garden with a bottle of a weird beer he had never heard of, letting the warmth of the sunset caress his tanned face.

It was beautiful really, all of those brilliant hues combining to paint the sky like a breath taking acrylic masterpiece that you would just want to burn into your memory.

How many more of these did he have left?

He remembered the first time he and Leafy went on an official date, one where they had actually told people they were together.

It was a warm, summer evening and they had gone to a small convince store and bought the coldest drinks they could find and they

headed to the outskirts of the town, where the vast forests and fields were.

They sat near the edge of the forest, the sun making everything around them seem like it was bathed in a golden light and they sat side by side as they watched the gorgeous colours fade away into haunting blues and silvers as the moon took it's place in the sky.

They spoke about anything that came to mind, no matter how silly or strange it was and Firey was enchanted by how pretty Leafy looked.

He had probably looked silly when he smiled at her, when he was with her he felt like he was drunk on his love for her, sometimes he'd just hold her close with that same goofy smile on his face.

Her laugh was contagious and her smile was all he wanted to see, he wanted to make her happy and goddammit he wanted to kiss her.

Fortunately, Leafy stopped talking for a moment, her eyes lingering on him for a moment before she pulled him in, kissing him firmly on the lips.

The fireflies had emerged from their sleep and the sun was almost set but it's remnants mixed with the dark clouds of the night, it felt unreal.

Her lips were soft and her touch was gentle, she had worn a sweet tasting lip-gloss and the feeling of her hand on his cheek tickled.

When Firey thinks back on it, that was probably one his favourite memories aside from the day he married her.

...

Firey closed his eyes, feeling tired as he remembered those dream-like moments and he felt like falling asleep, with a small smile on his face.

But life has decided it hates Firey and that he shouldn't be happy at any moment in time.

He was taken from his thoughts when he heard telling coming from

the house, he swore under his breath as he went inside to see what the hell was going on.

The voice that was yelling sounded familiar, he really didn't want to deal with them right now.

Firey stood in the doorway of the kitchen, leaning against the wall as he watched the scene in front of him.

Tree was frantically trying to ask Four where Firey was and to try send a search party out for someone, he was talking so fast no one could understand what he was saying.

Four quickly came into the hall, shaken up and off guard like he was most of the time nowadays and Tree continued to request for a search and rescue team and panic, he was breathing so quickly and was clearly terrified, he seemed very close to passing out.

Although Firey could entirely make out what Tree was saying, one word caught his attention,

Leafy.

Firey caught on quickly after realising what Tree was scared about but he needed to know everything before he jumped to conclusions, in Firey's current state that was dangerous.

Tired and fed up of the panicked babbling that came from the usually calm Tree, Firey strode over, stood in front of him and swiftly smacked him a crossed the face.

A stinging open-palm smack.

Tree stopped talking and stared at Firey in shock, only glaring slightly though.

"I can't understand a word of what you're saying," Firey said simply.

Rubbing his sore face and sighing, Tree calmed himself and began explaining what was going on in a much more coherent manner.

"It's Leafy, she's missing and I'm certain it's Two," he explained.

"Gelatin contacted me saying that he hasn't seen or heard from her in a few days, apparently he saw her talking to some weird looking green haired guy recently, that has to be Two,"

Tree looked Firey dead in the eyes, full of worry and concern, so full of emotion, it was so strange to see the normally empty expression he held to have so much fear.

"Gelatin never contacts me, there is something seriously wrong,"

Firey didn't reply, he felt every part of himself grow tense as he thought of what the hell Two could be planning.

He couldn't stand the idea of those disgusting hands hurting his wife.

He turned away, leaving Tree and Four standing there.

As Firey walked off, Tree called after him, demanding to know where he was going, still Firey gave no reply.

Tree and Four stood in the hallway with worried and confused looks on their faces as they both pondered the idea of following the flame haired man.

From down the hall, they heard a loud thud that sounded a lot like someone punching a wall and Four winced as they prayed it wasn't what they thought was.

A few minutes later, Firey walked back, papers and files clutched in a hand with fresh bruised knuckles and a terrible look in his eyes.

Firey shoved the items into Trees hands and once again he stormed away, this time towards Four's garage.

"Four, where are your keys?" he shouted.

"Firey, what the hell are you doing, talk to us for God's sake," Tree yelled after him.

Firey stood in the doorway to the garage, leaning against the frame as Tree and Four stood at the other end of the hall.

"If this is Two we're talking about and they have **my wife,** they're doing it to screw with me,"

"And if they're trying to screw with me, there's only one place they'd go,"

Firey strode over to Four with nothing but rage and hatred in his eyes as he stood right in front of them.

"Four, where are your keys?" Firey demanded.

"On the hook, on the left side of the garage door," they replied.

Firey turned on his heel and walked into the garage, Four followed him as he grabbed the keys from the wall, clutching them tightly.

A thought crossed Firey's mind just as he was about to open the car door, he called to Four, getting their attention.

"We're bringing guns," Firey said in a tone that was more demanding then suggesting.

"They're in my study," Four sighed tiredly. "Get me one,"

As Firey walked to Four's study, he stopped in front of Tree who hadn't said a word for the past few minutes, he appeared to be thinking.

"You coming with us?" Firey asked.

"No, someone needs to inform the agency so there's back up... and a medical team," Tree said, clearly thinking the whole situation through.

"Why do we need a med team?" Firey questioned.

"This is Two, you know what kind of sick, sadist they are and it isn't just for you and Four... ," Tree trailed off.

"We have no idea what they'll do to Leafy, you know better than anyone that Two will hurt anyone just for the fun of it," Tree muttered, suddenly feeling sick to his stomach.

Reality hit Firey like a ton of bricks, the realisation that Leafy's *life* could be in danger felt like a stab to the gut.

Firey felt weak in his legs, shaking violently as he tried to stop himself from doubling over.

Tree stepped toward him, placing a hand in his shoulder to steady the unstable man.

Firey looked up at Tree's face, one that was full of fear, saddness and resentment, such a strange thing to Firey.

"Firey listen to me, you cannot waste any time whatsoever, do whatever you need to do, just get Leafy back safely," Tree said, his voice breaking slightly.

"You can't afford to stay here much longer, you need to go,"

...

And so, Firey and Four were in the car, Firey driving at ungodly speeds, his knuckles tense and strained as he clutched the steering wheel tightly, the adrenaline rush had come back to him and he had an murderous look in his eyes.

Four clutched the door of the car, not much caring for the idiotic speeds Firey was going at, they knew why Firey was doing it but Four just wanted to slow down so they didn't die.

But Firey couldn't slow down, the location they were headed to was far, the drive would take eight to ten hours but with the right speed they'd get there much sooner.

Tree's words replayed in Firey's mind, he was right they couldn't mess around with Two, they needed to play this seriously.

As he sped down the freeway, Firey begged whatever God was up there to keep Leafy safe.

Firey's breathing had become heavy in an effort to keep himself calm but it wasn't really working, he knew more than anyone that Leafy isn't the type to back down and give up, it didn't matter who it was,

she wouldn't just lay down and let them win.

Two hated people like that.

If Two got fed up with her...

Firey's intake of breaths suddenly became sharp, his eyes were dangerous and dark as tears glistened in them, his whole body was tense and he was visibly shaking.

What would he do if he got there too late?

What would he do if her blood was on his hands?

A sad, chocked sob escaped from his mouth, he kept his eyes fixed on the road.

He can't, he can't lose her, if he lost her he'd have no one.

As his thoughts swirled, he felt a hand on his shoulder.

"Firey, it's going to be okay, we'll get her, don't worry," Four said in a calm tone.

"I know you're scared but you can't get in your own head, it's dangerous, we can't do anything if you crash this car,"

"You're right, I'm sorry," Firey said as he loosened his grip on the wheel slightly and lowered the speed.

As they continued through the darkness, the rest of the journey was silent.

All Firey could hear was the sound of his heart beating in his chest.

"I'll get you Leafy, just don't do anything stupid," he thought to himself.

= =

And if somebody hurts you, I wanna fight but my hands been broken too many times.

Hope you enjoyed that chapter!

XOXO
LeafCake

Chapter 32

A few minutes ago, Leafy had woken up.

In the last few days she had grown to hate opening her eyes because when she did, she was reminded that she was tied up in a damp warehouse with no idea of where she was.

She saw a rat run across the floor, it stopped around half way and looked at her, it's small nose and beady eyes glistening in the cold air.

"Hey," she murmured.

In response, the rat ran away.

She sighed deeply as she gazed up at the ceiling, her head grey and fuzzy as it usually was lately due to lack of food or proper rest .

There were no thoughts, she simply looked around her with dull eyes and a headache.

She was glad Grove couldn't see her right now, she was a wreck and she probably would have scared him.

Grove...

The thought of his little grin and fluffy hair brought a weak smile to her face as she remembered how sweet his laughter was and how warm he felt when he was all snuggled up with his teddies.

What would happen to Grove if something happened to her here?

She had never actually given it serious thought and there were no official guardians for him to go to.

Yes, Firey was his father but not legally, there were no documents showing proof Grove was his kid.

Maybe he'd go to Pin and Coiny since they often took care of him anyway.

She couldn't stand the idea that she wouldn't get to see him grow up and that thought alone made her all the more determined to get out of this hell hole.

Was Firey going to come looking for her? Or was that just completely impossible?

How would he even know where she was?

Her mind had been doing this the whole time she had been here, constantly switching between determination to escape or just giving up entirely.

She let her muscles relax as she slid against the pipe slightly, her head aching from all of the stress.

She wondered if anyone had noticed she was gone, if anyone had started to search.

Was there even a chance anyone would find her ?

She just wanted to get out of here, to hold Grove in her arms again and just forget everything that had happened lately.

She wanted to go back to her usual routine without any worry or uncertainty, she wanted her life back.

And yet, despite everything, she still wanted Firey.

She wanted him to hold her close and kiss all the fear and pain away, she wanted him to tell her he wasn't going to leave again, that he would stay with her for good.

She wanted to hear him say he loved her, she wanted him to wrap her up in his jacket like he used to do when they first started dating.

But more than anything, she wanted to hear Grove call him "Papa", she wanted to see the way his face would light up at hearing that for the first time, she wanted them to be a real family.

She sure was greedy, wasn't she?

To want so much and not expect to have to give something in return.

Was this her price?

Or was this her punishment for her selfishness and greed?

Maybe, if she was good, she would get out of here and have what she wanted.

After coming so close to having the family she had yearned for and having it all taken away, she couldn't just stop trying, not now.

Unfortunately, her resolve faded away once again and she hung her head in shame.

Maybe in some sick way, she deserved this.

...

Some time later, Nickel walked in looking as tired as ever, with another sandwich and some water.

She wolfed down the sandwich as if it were the most perfect thing she had ever eaten and the water was straight from a source in the Alps.

"Thank you," she mumbled, still with food in her mouth.

"Don't mention it," Nickel sighed.

Nickel noted that Leafy's eyes were dull, very different from the fear or anticipation that he had seen when he first saw her.

She was smiling at him but there was just something off about it, it didn't feel real.

He knew what was happening, she was on the verge of giving up, on the verge of letting Two get the better of her, on the verge of letting Two win.

He simply couldn't let that happen, not to her.

Grabbing her by the shoulders, he pulled her closer so she could hear what he said.

"Listen to me, you can't stop fighting, you need to keep going, you can't let that bastard have the satisfaction of seeing you yield, stay in the game,don't become a pawn to them,"

Leafy blinked a few times in confusion and Nickel let out a heavy sigh.

"I know you have a kid, keep going for their sake," he said as he let go.

Without a word,Leafy watched him leave but she felt the tightness in her chest had lessened slightly.

And she had finally made her choice.

...

Once again, Leafy was taken from her thoughts when the door opened, she had hoped it was Nickel but life had other plans.

Two walked, still smiling and still smug as they approached her.

"Ah, this brings back memories," they sighed happily.

"You look just like your husband did when he was in this situation,"

Leafy glared furiously at the green eyed man, wishing she could somehow escape and rip his teeth out.

"The only difference is that he was in much more pain," they laughed mockingly. "Oh, and there was much more blood,"

"His blood,"

She began to tremble as she bared her teeth and lashed out like a wild animal.

She hated the idea that this disgusting man had hurt Firey, that this freak had dared to lay a finger on the man she loved.

"Oh, you're just like him, he was a fighter too, you're absolutely perfect for each other," they chuckled.

"However, he cried a lot more, embarrassing really," Two sniffed.

Firey had ...cried?

By now, Leafy had recoiled, no longer thrashing about, she stared up at the monster in front of her.

She was livid.

"I must say you're much more pleasant than he was, I definitely prefer you," they smiled.

Two reached a hand out to move some hair out of Leafy's eyes .

Quicker than Two could react, she moved her head and bit down sharply on their hand, earning a yell from Two.

Making the most of her situation, she bucked her legs and kicked their stomach, Leafy released her teeth from his hand as Two stumbled backwards in pain.

After a moment of hissing and cursing, Two looked at Leafy with a glare and a smile, looking completely insane.

"I take it back, you're exactly the same you bitch,"

They coughed a few times before straightening themself up and walking over to Leafy again.

Leafy gave them a challenging look as they continued to smile.

She had expected a hit, a slap or something very direct and painful.

What she hadn't expected was to feel his hands wrap around her throat, immediately applying pressure .

The air felt like it was trapped in her lungs as she felt her face heat up and a stabbing pain thumped in her neck.

She felt the pressure building in her head and as the pain increased

she felt her vision narrow and grow blurry.

She let out shakey attempts at breathing as strangled sounds came from her blocked throat.

Her eyes watered as she looked to her assailant pleadingly, desperately trying to claw their hands off her neck.

She was going to lose consciousness and Two kept glaring.

Everything was growing dim and seemed almost far away, her hands were slowing and losing their strength as she weakly held Two's wrists in a last ditch effort.

However, to her relief, they let go, placing their hands behind their back as they stood in front of her.

Her vision became focused much sooner than she had anticipated, she stared at Two in shock as she panted heavily.

It was at that moment, she realized she was playing a dangerous game.

And she also happened to notice the gun holster hidden under Two's jacket.

How stupid was she?

"Now that wasn't pleasant for either of us, was it?" Two said simply.

Leafy gave no reply, still trying to catch her breath.

"I am a professional at my job Leafy, every action should be perfectly thought through on your part,"

She was terrified, even if she wanted to she had no idea what to say.

Two was right, she needed to get careful.

As the pair glowered one another, they were brought to alert when they heard an engine roar followed by the loud screech of car tires.

"Looks like we have guests," Two grinned.

Leafy's eyes shone with a faint glimmer of hope as she listened out carefully.

Two had locked the main entrance so whoever was trying to get in had to attempt to break it down.

Two maintained their composed smile as their gaze was fixated on the door, Leafy's eyebrows were furrowed together as she prayed it was who she hoped for.

For a moment, the thumping stopped and Leafy jumped in fright as she heard a gun be fired.

The sound of impact was dull and metallic, presumably the person was trying to shoot the doors hinges.

There was silence for a moment until a yell was heard and a loud thud followed by a bang erupted through the building as the door came off it's hinges and fell to the floor.

As the dust cleared, Leafy could finally see who was coming to save her.

But she would know that frustrated yell anywhere.

...

Standing in the doorway, looking like hell personified...

Was none other than Firey Brennt.

With his gun aimed at Two and an enraged look in his eyes, he was ready to kill.

"We have you surrounded, surrender yourself , it's over," Firey demanded.

"And get the fuck away from my goddamn wife,"

= = = =

Now someone gotta die and now my only opponent
'Cause I won't watch my baby cry,
So I keep on just going.
Am I a man or a beast,

Hope you enjoyed that chapter.

XOXO
LeafCake

Chapter 33

Firey's blood felt like it was on fire.

In fact, every part of him scorched with heat and fury as he glared at the insane man in front of him.

From behind Two, he could see Leafy who looked like she had seen better days, she looked terrified and tired but there was a small, loving smile on her face that lit her up.

No matter what, Firey was going to get her home.

Firey had insisted he enter the building first, Four was outside conferring with other members of the agency on what the best course of action was, they would be joining him soon but Firey wanted to see Two's face properly and face him one on one.

"Oh my, what a romantic turn of events, the young bastard come to save the love of his life," Two cackled.

"Just surrender quietly Two, maybe you'll get parole if you behave," Firey responded.

"It's over, give it up,"

At those words, Two's face changed, they no longer smiled, instead a scowl-like expression took it's place and the insane glint on their eyes turned dim and hateful.

"You're probably going to demand an explanation from me, aren't you?" Two sighed.

"That'll be the least of it," Firey snapped.

"Well then, allow me to illuminate your dark, disgraceful mind," Two said, their smile returning.

"But first..."

Two reached for the holster on their belt, drawing out the gun that sat there and pointed it at Firey.

"Now it's much more equal,"

Firey's throat felt dry but he did his best to stay strong, having a gun pointed at you was very emotionally jarring.

"After you escaped this very same warehouse, I began researching you, I found out almost everything about you, I've had eyes on you for years," Two's voice was calm and gentle but there was a hint of tension behind it.

"I learned that you have people you care about, to a fault even and after a lot of digging, I found out about this lovely woman right here," Two said as they gestured to Leafy.

"You've always been just out of reach Detective Brennt, despite all my knowledge, I could never quite get to you but, good things come to those who wait, don't they?" Two grinned like a Cheshire cat.

Firey's expression darkened as he placed a slight bit of pressure on the trigger, daring Two to say something about Leafy.

Two stayed relaxed and composed, like he was scolding a child who had been throwing a tantrum.

"This pretty girl is your Achilles heel, isn't she? You'd do anything to make sure she's safe, you'd even throw your own life away, am I right?"

"I figured out that all I needed to have you where I want you was to get to her and I must say, she's been wonderful company," Two laughed.

"I know that the sun is setting for me, my carefully sculpted empire is collapsing and it's all because of you," Two hissed accusingly.

"So, why shouldn't I take something important from you? She's much too pretty for you anyway,"

Firey wanted to just charge at Two, to beat him to the point he wouldn't even be able to use that stupid smile ever again.

Firey was trembling with rage while Two was stupidly smug, both of them had their attention on the barrel of the other's gun, both of them equally tense but keeping it hidden.

Neither of them looked at Leafy, as much as Firey wanted to see if she was alright, he knew better than to turn his back on Two, who would use any cheap tactic to win.

Leafy was watching the scene unfolding in front her, scared out of her wits and pleading that it would end well, with herself and Firey leaving this place together.

When Two had taken out the gun it took everything in her willpower not to kick and yell at the top of her lungs .

How dare that prick threaten Firey? She wanted to punch him senseless, with no restraint or remorse.

Nothing could happen to Firey, they needed to get out of here side by side, he needed to hear Grove call him "papa" for the first time, he needed to have the chance of living the life he never got to live.

She heard footsteps from behind her and she did her best to turn as quietly as possible to see Nickel, with his finger to his lips as an indication for her to be quiet.

He undid the ropes that kept her trapped and helped her to her feet, she wanted to know why he did that but he quietly shushed her and pointed at Two while shaking his head.

Just as Nickel was about to go back into hiding, Leafy grabbed his hand and mouthed "thank you," to him with a smile.

He returned the gesture and wished her luck before darting off into the shadows once more.

She stood up for the first time in a while and immediately, a harsh, stabbing pain shot through her and she had to cover her mouth and bite her tongue in order to stop herself from screaming and she

slumped to her knees.

Every part of her felt like it was burning, tears pricked her eyes as she clenched her fingers into fists, trying to see through her blurred vision.

She pushed herself up again, this time she was able to stay upright but the pain still remained.

With each step she took, it felt like pure hell, like a knife stabbing from the inside but she needed to keep going, she wasn't going to sit back and do nothing.

If something happened to Firey, she wouldn't be able to forgive herself.

She held her breath as she got closer to Two, doing her best not to grab Firey's attention incase it gave her position away, staying silent the whole time.

She was right behind the green haired snake, she needed to act quickly, any distraction would ruin her whole plan...

Using all of her strength, she lunged forward, restraining both of Two's arms and forcing the gun to no longer be aimed at Firey, instead having it point upwards with no chance of misfiring and hitting him.

Keeping the gun aimed but with no clear mark, Firey frantically tried to figure out what to do as he watched Leafy and Two struggle against each other.

He should have just shot when he had the chance, now Leafy was too close and Firey wouldn't be able to even make an attempt without running the risk of hurting her.

Two was cursing at Leafy, doing their best to try push her off, both of them trying to grab the gun.

Friey did his best to aim but they kept moving, there was no way to get a clear shot through.

His thoughts raced as he desperately tried to come up with ideas or ways to disarm Two without any harm coming to Leafy.

His heart was beating faster than it ever had before, by now his hands were shaking and even if he had a clear shot, he wasn't sure if he would hit his target.

Leafy was putting up a good fight, she always was stronger than she looked and she was fighting dirty, kicking, hair pulling and biting, she did everything she could think of.

Leafy had forced Two's arm to point totally upwards, and her hand was only on their bicep, the only person with proper contact with the gun was Two.

It would be tough but maybe Firey could shoot Two's hand, making them drop the gun and in addition, they would be wounded and in shock.

There was still a chance of misfiring but it was better than trying to shoot for a kill but they kept moving, he couldn't tell if it was too risky.

He needed to calm himself and then take aim, he would definitely miss if he tried anything now...

Firey squinted his eyes shut, just for a moment, less than ten seconds, just to compose his nerves.

He needed to control himself, it would all be worth it, he needed to breathe.

Stay calm, stop shaking, hold it properly.

Bang.

The loud, sudden noise caused a ringing in Firey's ears and it took him a moment to register what was going on.

With his gun still aimed at Two, Firey realized that the gun was no longer aimed in the air and was instead near to Two's waist.

For a moment, everything was still and deathly quiet.

Leafy suddenly fell limp, clinging to Two's jacket in an attempted to stay balanced but her weakness betrayed her.

"I told you to let go," Two shrugged with a smile as they took a step backwards, shoving Leafy as the did so.

Firey's blood no longer boiled, it felt cold and so did his sweat, everything around him seemed to become dim and far away as he watched Leafy crouch down and curl into a tight ball on the filthy, freezing warehouse floor with her back to him, clutching herself like a hug.

Despite staring open mouthed and in total shock, Firey knew that Two was aiming at him.

He knew they still had that smile on their face.

Without hesitating, Firey shifted himself slightly, raised his gun, aimed and fired.

After firing, he sprinted to Two, punched them square in the jaw after knocking them to the floor and kicked the gun from their hand.

Firey yelled for Four before turning his attention to Leafy and falling to his knees beside her, picking her up gently and cradling her, one hand supporting her head, the other on her stomach.

Full of dread, he saw her stomach from the corner of his eye and one again fear drove through his nerves.

A pool of blood was slowly but surely forming and Leafy's breathing was laboured and soft.

Firey's hands were covered in blood.

Her blood.

"No, no, no, no," Firey pleaded quietly as he gazed into Leafy's eyes, although she was going though horrific pain they still looked beautiful, so eerily perfect and glistening with tears.

She gave him a weak smile as she clutched his arm, sighing slightly.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean for this to happen, I just wanted to make sure nothing happened to you," she choked.

"You idiot," Firey said as a sob escaped from his mouth.

"Firey, I want you to look after Grove, okay?," Leafy breathed.

"No, we're both gonna look after him, you're gonna see him grow up, you're gonna be there," Firey insisted.

She continued to smile but Firey could see her faltering as the pain got worse.

"You're gonna be okay, you're gonna be okay," Firey said as tears streamed down his face.

At that moment, Four walked in, alone and glaring as they cocked their gun.

Electric blue eyes locked with burning red ones and a nod of agreement was shared.

Four stood over Two as they writhed on the ground in agony, with a sick, gargle-like laugh coming from them.

"How fitting, killed by the one who started this case, the who ruined and ended so many lives indirectly," Two cackled.

"I did what I had to," Four defended.

"To die, to sleep; to sleep, perchance to dream," Two spoke dramatically.

Four gave a disgusted look as they groaned

"God, you're pretentious,"

Four pointed the gun at Two's head, upon seeing this, Firey covered Leafy's ears with his hands, praying it would be enough to block out the sound, she shouldn't have to hear something so horrible .

Bang.

And just like that, it was over.

They shot again just to be certain, kicked the maniac's side and walked over to a distressed Firey.

Four placed a hand on Firey's shoulder, genuinely feeling for him as someone who had lost the only person they loved.

"Tree called the agency's medics, they'll be here soon," Four tried to reassure.

Another sob came from Firey and he turned away, placing his forehead against Leafy's before he kissed her.

"I wonder what Grove is gonna grow up to be, I hope he's happy though," she whispered.

"You'll see it, you'll see him, you'll -" Firey's words were becoming incoherent as his tears

Leafy's sad smile was heartbreaking for Firey to see, he couldn't bare the thought of losing her and the idea of Grove losing her hurt him in ways he couldn't explain.

The medics would arrive shortly, until then Firey needed to keep her conscious and responsive, he needed to staunch the flow of blood.

Taking his jacket off he wrapped it tightly around Leafy's torso as a crappy makeshift bandage and kept his hand over it to apply pressure.

He needed to keep her talking, he needed to keep her with him, she needed to be distracted.

"Leafy, tell me about when Grove was born," he said.

Leafy furrowed her eyebrows and sighed. "I know what you're doing, Firey,"

"No, please, just tell me," he begged.

Leafy took a deep, shakey breath as she started.

"It was a lovely, warm day, he was born sometime around noon," she began.

"Very early that morning I felt the contractions and I knew I needed to get to the hospital, I drove myself and I was put in a room with cute dupcks and meadows painted onto the walls and there was a perfect amount of natural light coming in from the windows,"

Firey's grip on Leafy tightened as though he was scared to let go.

"Unfortunately, no one else was there but there was a nurse who was so sweet and she held my hand the whole time, I probably broke the poor woman's hand, it hurt like hell," she laughed weakly.

"But after all of it, the doctors held him, wrapped him in a small green blanket and I got to hold him for the very first time,"

Tears ran down her face as she recalled the day and the possibility she wouldn't hold him again was killing her.

"He was a healthy baby and that was all I needed but to make things even better, he was the prettiest baby I had ever seen, I even heard the doctors saying the same thing when they thought I couldn't hear them," she smiled.

Firey did his best to smile but his shakiness betrayed him as he brushed some hair from her eyes.

"Firey, he was the most perfect baby, he was so well behaved, he always nursed, he always stared at everything in wonder, I was blessed with him I swear," she sighed happily.

"It was the least you deserved after what you went through," Firey nodded as he continued to comfort her.

"He really is a little knight in shining armor, he's the best little guy, " Leafy's eyes welled up.

"Tell him I love him Firey, please," she requested.

"You can tell him yourself, I promise," Firey muttered.

"No, tell me...tell me you'll look after him...promise," Leafy was growing increasingly weaker.

"No...I can't-" Firey stammered.

"Promise me Firey, you need to look after him, you need to help him if I'm not there," she insisted.

"I...I promise," Firey said reluctantly.

Leafy pushed herself up slightly and kissed Firey gently.

At the sudden change, Firey held her close, her blood staining his clothes but he didn't care.

"This really isn't ideal, is it?" Leafy smiled.

Firey gave no response, unable to talk through his crying.

"If I...make it...I-I'm not...gonna let you go again, Firey,"

"I won't leave," he choked.

From outside there was loud talking and a moment later, med teams rushed in and Four directed them over to Firey and Leafy.

They had to force Firey's hands off her and he pleaded with them to be careful and to help her.

"We'll do our best, sir," was all he got in response.

He watched as Leafy was carried out in a stretcher and placed in an ambulance, leaving him behind.

...

He was a mess, sitting on the dirty floor, his head hanging and hair covering his eyes and sticking to him from the sweat.

His clothes were stained with blood as were his hands, he was still crying but no sound came out any more.

He was blood and tear soaked mess and he was supposed to be a lead detective.

He didn't want to be though.

Four helped him up and walked him to the car, nothing really registered with Firey at the moment, it all felt blurred and hot yet cold at the same time.

Four drove back to their house, Firey didn't protest and slept for almost the entire journey.

By the time they got to Four's house, Firey was informed that Leafy was in a hospital outside the city that had connections to the agency.

He was not told what her status was.

As he lay in bed, he planned out the next few days.

He needed to see Grove and make sure he was okay, he wouldn't tell him everything but he'd say that mama was just...busy for a while.

Leafy would be alright, Leafy would be alright.

He felt empty as he stared up at the ceiling, everything was numb and terrifyingly peaceful as he lay in the dark.

He was going to try visit Leafy as soon as he was able to but he knew that Leafy would want Grove to he the priority.

As soon as Firey saw Grove, he would give him the best bear hug that anyone has ever had.

Firey owed him so much more than the little guy would ever know.

And just like Leafy, in such a short amount of time, he had come to adore him.

= = = =

Your face it haunts, my once pleasant dreams
Your voice it chased away, all the sanity in me.

Hope you enjoyed that chapter.
XOXO
LeafCake

Chapter 34

Firey was nervous, anxious and terrified.

He was currently on a bus into the city, as the sun set so he could get Grove from Coiny and Pin's house.

What the hell was he supposed to say in this situation?

Leafy was in hospital, having undergone surgery that had thankfully been successful but Firey still hadn't seen her.

He stayed at Four's house for a few more days before he decided that he needed to see Grove and let him know that his mom was safe.

Firey knew how close Leafy and Grove were, the kid was probably worried sick for his mother, he was so like her that he was certain he had her empathy.

He still couldn't comprehend that Grove was *his* son, he felt stupid for not catching on sooner though.

Grove looked mostly like Leafy, similar hair colour, similar eyes and he had her charm, clearly Leafy's son.

But he inherited Firey's dusting of freckles, his fluffy hair and upon closer inspection they smiled the same way.

There were other things too, small hints of orange in his eyes, highlights of yellow-orange in his hair and his overall behavior was just like Firey.

Grove was his son, a part of him.

A balance of Leafy and Firey, a bit of them both, made from love.

...

As he stood outside the door of Pin and Coiny's apartment, his stomach felt sick and empty and he almost didn't want to press the doorbell.

He heard footsteps approach the door and the handle turned as it was opened.

"Hey," Coiny said.

"Hi," Firey nodded.

An awkward tension hung between them as Firey tried to figure out what to say.

The two had never been friends, they only knew each other through Leafy and Firey had never been particularly fond of Coiny.

He knew how Coiny had felt about her, he never admitted it but Firey saw right through him, especially when they were in college.

He always looked at her a certain way, laughed at what she laughed at and often gazed at her longingly, something he would never have.

But Coiny knew where the line was and nothing ever went past lingering glances, he had Pin and she was perfect.

Firey didn't mind Pin, she was always kind to Leafy and was a form of support for her and her presence stopped Coiny from being a jerk and for that, he was greatful.

The sad thing was that neither of the women knew what was going on, it was an unspoken piece of knowledge between Coiny and Firey that would go to the grave.

"I'm here to pick up Grove," Firey coughed , doing his best not to glare at the man in front of him.

"Okay, I'll go get him," Coiny said as he turned away.

About a minute later, small footsteps caught Firey's attention and he looked up to see Grove standing in the front door, staring up at him with sad eyes.

"Hey," Firey gave a small smile as he crouched so he was eye level with the child.

"Where's mama?" Grove asked quietly.

"She's alright, she's in a place with good people who can help her," Firey said in an assuring tone.

"Can I see her?" Grove asked as he twiddled his thumbs.

"I think it's a bit late but we can see her tomorrow if you want," Firey suggested.

"Okay," Grove replied sadly.

"Do you wanna go home or do you wanna stay here?" Firey questioned.

After taking a moment to think, Grove responded.

"Home,"

"Okay, come on" Firey said, offering out a hand.

Grove walked forward but he was so used to being picked up by his mother whenever she came to get him that his arms reached out instinctively to be held.

Unsure of what to do, Firey picked Grove up and the tired little guy latched on and cuddled close to Firey and his warmth.

For a minute, the world seemed to slip away for Firey as Grove nuzzled against him, his hands holding onto the fabric of his shirt as he got comfortable.

Holding Grove in his arms felt unreal but so right at the same time, he didn't want to let go.

After so much pain and fear, after years of longing and mental battles, he was holding his son in his arms, his child finding comfort in him.

He held Grove safely and firmly, terrified and happy at the same time as he cuddled him, his soft hair tickling his cheek.

Firey looked up when he realized he was still standing outside the apartment and he saw Pin with her hands against her mouth, hiding a smile as tears glimmered in her eyes.

"That was so cute," she squeaked.

"Sorry, I kinda lost it a bit there," Firey smiled awkwardly.

"Don't be sorry, I'm so glad I got to see that," Pin grinned.

"Yeah, you're a real dad," Coiny nodded, smiling lovingly at Pin.

Despite everything, Coiny really loved Pin, maybe more than he had loved Leafy, he was a lot of things but he wasn't a total piece of shit.

"Thanks for looking after him," Firey sighed.

"No worries," the couple said in unison.

"I'll see you soon," Firey said as he turned away.

"Bye!" Pin called before she closed the door.

Grove waved tiredly as Firey walked towards the elevator.

As the two made their way home, Grove yawned and began to doze off, the rhythm of Firey's steps and the calm breeze felt soothing to him as he held onto Firey.

Firey carried him home, the whole way, he didn't want to put him down, he liked having Grove close.

Once they were in the apartment, Firey carefully placed a very sleepy Grove down on the ground and he helped him get ready for bed.

"Is mama here?" Grove wondered.

"No, she isn't but I promise you'll see her tomorrow," Firey said as he gave a small thumbs up.

"I want my mama, I miss her," Grove mumbled, small tears formed in the corners of his eyes.

"I know how you feel but your mom is in a good place and they'll look after her for us for a little bit and then she'll be able to be with us again," Firey said as he carried Grove upstairs once he was done with his bedtime routine.

"I don't wanna sleep by myself," Grove grumbled.

"Oh, why's that?" Firey asked.

"Too scary, I don't like the dark," Grove sighed tiredly.

Firey knew all too well what it was like to be scared of the dark, to be alone and afraid with no one to comfort you.

Like father, like son.

"Do you want me to stay beside you for a bit, until you fall asleep?" Firey offered.

"Mhm hm," Grove nodded.

After turning the lights off and making sure Grove was nice and snug, Firey lay on a small, space-themed blanket beside him.

As the tired child began to fall asleep, he clutched Firey's hand in his own small one, dragging him thumb over Firey's warm skin in a repeated motion.

Slowly the motion stopped and after a while, Groves breathing grew steady and Firey smiled softly as he carefully and quietly got up to leave.

Just as he sat upright however, he heard a little voice say.

"Please don't go,"

Grove's eyes were open slightly as he stared pleadingly at Firey who stared right back.

"Okay, I'll stay," Firey said as he laid back down.

The green haired child got off his bed and moved to the floor, laying right next to Firey, his eyes now closed again.

"You're gonna stay on the floor?" Firey whispered.

"Mhm hm," Grove murmured.

"Alright then, buddy," Firey smiled fondly.

Firey sat up and reached out to grab the pillow from Grove's bed and adjusted Grove so his head rested on it, he then pulled the blanket from the bed and pulled it over them both.

Grove snuggled into Firey's chest as he curled up and finally settled down, once again holding Firey's hand and repeating the thumb motion.

In the darkness Firey admired Grove's gentle features and watched as he breathed slowly and steadily, on the verge of sleep.

Firey was not a very emotional person, nothing ever really sparked any strong feelings in him, he was always very calm and relaxed about most things.

But noting would ever strike him as much as Grove's next words did.

"Goodnight, papa" said a small, sleepy voice.

As Grove slept soundly against him, Firey had to do his best not to make a sound as tears rolled down his face.

For the rest of the night, Firey never let his son out of his embrace.
= = = =

Chapter 35

Beep, beep.

Beep, beep.

Leafy opened her eyes ever so slightly but closed them straight away when they met an overly bright light.

Her body felt stiff and sweaty and she felt extremely uncomfortable, she hated laying flat on her back, she needed to move.

Very carefully and slowly, she opened her eyes little by little and allowed them to adjust to the harsh brightness around her and she realize that there wasn't a bright light looming over her, she was instead in a very white room.

A lot like a hospital...

The memories hit her suddenly, catching her off guard and causing her breath to catch in her throat.

Two's horrible smile, being tied to a pole, the agonizing pain before Firey burst through that door.

It all went blurry from there, her last clear memory was of a horrific pain in her torso as everything went dark.

She was pretty sure she had been shot or at least had something impaled into her and she had blacked out not long after.

She was certain she was going to bleed out in Firey's arms, gazing up at him and taking in his face one last time.

She had never seen him cry like that before.

Where was he now? Did he make it out alright or did something

happen?

She needed to know if he was okay, now that she was awake her main priorities were Firey and Grove.

She wasn't sure how long she had been here but she had been bandaged up but she felt...stale.

She attempted to push herself up but winced at the sharp pain she felt in her stomach and lay back on the bed trying to calm herself.

"It's probably not the best idea to get up so suddenly," a voice said.

She knew that voice, it was a kind voice but she never thought she would hear it in person again.

Turning her head in the direction the voice came from, a small gasp escaped from her mouth before a smile formed on her lips.

"It's been a while," she joked.

"Yeah, too long, I'm sorry," Tree responded.

She looked around quickly and it occurred to her that she was in a very unflattering pair of hospital pajamas and her hair hadn't been washed properly in a long time, she probably looked like a mess.

"I'm sorry you have to see me like this," she said in an apologetic tone.

"Don't be sorry, you've been through a lot lately, trying to look good shouldn't be your main goal right now," Tree shrugged.

"How bad is it?" She asked.

"Do you remember that time when you fell into the thorn bush and rolled into a mud puddle when we were kids?" Tree wondered.

"Yes,"

"Like that but about five times worse,"

"Ah, crap"

Leafy sat up against the metal headboard, placing a pillow behind her to add comfort and asked Tree to hand her the hair tie that was on his wrist.

"That looks better," Tree nodded after Leafy tied her hair back into a cute ponytail with two strands hanging down from her fringe.

From there on Leafy and Tree had a pleasant, casual conversation, talking about awkward family dinners that went wrong, the silly games they used to play together and anything else that came to mind, it was just so nice and simple and Leafy loved it.

She had missed Tree in her life, he was the only person in her family who she actually enjoyed being with.

Of course she loved her mother and father but they could be a bit much sometimes, Tree was just safe to talk to since he had no reason to tell her what to do.

They had been so close for most of their life but had started to drift apart when Leafy was in her late teens and Tree got a job he didn't tell anyone about.

After he got that job his visits became less and less frequent and after some time, she just assumed that she wouldn't see him again.

She thought about it a bit and realized it was probably the same job Firey had, investigating into cases that were too grim or dangerous for the public to know about.

After a while Tree left but not before promising to be in Leafy's life more and that he "wouldn't be a stranger"

Leafy also convinced him to meet Grove but it didn't take much convincing for him to agree to that.

Not long after he left, Leafy fell asleep. Her body was exhausted after everything she had been through and it was sleeping almost every chance it could.

Her arms were covered in bandages and she hadn't even dared to look at her stomach but she knew that she definitely looked worse for

wear.

Sleeping was peaceful, she didn't have to worry about doctors asking her questions, nurses giving her checkups or worrying about how she looked.

Her hospital room was in a good location, the sun could shine in through the window in the late afternoon and the light always cheered her up and made her feel warmer.

She rested her eyes as she listened to the birds chirping and she felt the warm rays settle on her face while she practiced breathing exercises.

Everything was fairly calm and quiet as the hospital was fairly far from any major city, it was all very peaceful.

Until she heard a little voice saying, "Mama's in there, the doctor said so,"

Caught by happiness and surprise, Leafy choked mid-breath as she sat up and stared eagerly at the door, hoping she heard what she thought she heard.

And to her joy, the handle turned downwards and when the door opened, her little baby was standing there with the sweetest smile she had ever seen.

...

Firey and Grove stood outside the hospital, both of them were nervous about walking in but Grove being a child simply continued, with the hope of seeing his mother.

Firey walked Grove over to the reception desk, lifting him in his arms so he could see everything and Firey asked if a patient named Leafy Arbre was there.

After asking him a few questions, the nurse told him where she was and Firey held Grove carefully as he walked to the elevator.

He should be happy right now, he was going to see Leafy and she was

alive after all of the horrible things that happened.

She went through all of that because of him...

He was so scared to see her, so scared of her rejection that he decided to do the only thing he knew how to.

He would hide.

"Grove, you can go into you mom's room and talk to her and I'll stay outside okay?" Firey said to Grove as the elevator doors opened.

"Okie dokie," Grove smiled, not understanding what Firey meant by it.

The continued on down the long corridor, Grove running ahead and extremely excited to see his mama again.

He kept telling Firey to follow him and insisting that he knew the way and Firey simply smiled and went along with it.

After much longer than expected, Grove ran faster and stopped at a room, jumping up and down and pointing at the number and saying this was where the doctor told them to go.

As Grove went to open the door, Firey stopped him and said quietly,

"Don't tell your mom I'm out here okay?,"

Grove nodded but it was clear he didn't understand and before Firey could say another word he walked right into the room.

For Firey, everything around him became muffled and he was slightly disoriented, he could feel his heart beating as he leaned against the wall to keep his balance.

The fact that Leafy was so close, yet he wouldn't even face her told him too much about himself.

He was a coward, despite everything he has done in his life, he is a coward.

...

At the sight of his mother, Grove's little face lit up and he walked over to her quickly, his small hands holding onto the bed frame as he jumped up and down.

"Hi mama, hi mama," he yelled happily.

"Hello Grovey," Leafy grinned as she reached out and gave Grove a kiss on the head.

"I missed you mama," Grove said, stretching his hand out to hold Leafy's.

"It's all okay now Grove, Mama's here," Leafy assured.

"And it's okay for you too mama because I'm here," Grove beamed.

Grove bounced on his toes, his eyes bright and happy as he babbled on to Leafy about the colouring book he had been working on while she was gone.

"There's a spaceman with a doggy and he goes woof woof and there's a unicorn and he's eating cake," Grove giggled.

As much as Leafy enjoyed Grove's little story, she remembered she was in a hospital and the walls weren't that thick.

"Grovey, can you be a little quieter for mama? There's people around and they're trying to sleep," Leafy asked, putting her finger to her lips.

"Okay mama," Grove nodded, copying Leafys gesture.

"You're such a good boy, Grovey," Leafy smiled softly. "Would you like to cuddle and you can tell me all about your book,"

Grove smiled even wider when he clambered up onto the bed with a little help from Leafy and in a minute he was snuggled against her, latching on like a koala.

She rested her cheek against the top of his head, rubbing her skin

against his soft, fluffy hair and giving him a gentle backrub, something she used to do when he was just a baby.

He was still a baby, he was her baby and he always would be.

His skin was a tad cool, he was just like her, a naturally cold body temperature meaning he would get cold easily.

She needed to remember to make sure he wrapped up in winter...

"In my book, there's a fairy princess and I made her green because she's pretty like you, mama," Grove said proudly.

"Aw, that's very sweet of you Grove, have you put anyone else in the book," Leafy wondered.

For a moment, Grove turned his head toward the door of the room before returning to Leafy with a thoughtful look in his eyes.

"There's a bad guy in the book and I made him orange like Firey," Grove admitted sadly.

"Oh," was all Leafy could say.

"But, Firey was nice to me and he minded me and I made him be the fairy king," Grove said with a small smile.

"I'm glad you did that Grove, Firey isn't a bad guy, I think he's just a little scared," Leafy sighed.

"He missed you too mama, I think he's sad," Grove said quietly.

"I do wish he were here, I'm feeling kind of sad myself," Leafy smiled wanly.

Grove looked to the door once again, then back to his mother.

"He's outside mama, he's there," Grove said as he pointed to the door.

"What, huh?" Leafy gasped.

"He said he was going to wait outside, I think he's scared too," Grove nodded.

Leafy's face grew serious as her jaw tightened.

"Grove, could you go ask Firey to come in please?" Leafy requested.

Grove gave her a small thumbs up he climbed down from the bed and walked to the door.

...

"Firey,"

Firey's attention turned to the door as he stared down at Grove.

"Mama wants you to come in,"

Firey gave Grove a bewildered look, glaring ever so slightly.

"You snitched on me?!" Firey scoffed.

Grove simply shrugged as he turned around to get back into his mother's arms.

"Little snitch, he definitely gets it from Leafy," Firey grumbled under his breath.

...

When Firey saw Leafy's face a mix of emotions hit him at once.

Regret, fear, relief and happiness.

He really did love her, but he's the reason she's suffered and still is

He's the reason she's even here.

"Even after everything, you're still trying to hide," she said with hurt in her voice.

"I'm sorry" was all Firey could think to say.

"I know you're scared Firey but this is what you do, you always hide and I'm left to deal with the remnants of it all," Leafy sighed.

"I've dealt with all of this and I've had to face it head on and you can't even handle seeing me? It hurts Firey, it hurts that the man who's supposed to love me isn't able to look at me properly,"

"I do love you, please don't think I don't just because I'm a coward," Firey said quietly.

"All I want, all I've *ever* wanted, was to have you with me, *with us* and to he able to rely on you and take comfort in you and when you came back I really thought I could have that," Leafy said, her voice breaking slightly.

"I've needed you so many times, I just wanted you in my life but even after all of this, you still feel the need to run, what do I have to do to make you stay because I feel like I've tried everything and it never works,"

An empty silence hung in the air and in that moment, Firey felt like a ragdoll, heavy and limp.

"Leafy, all my life I've been scared and there came a point where I couldn't fight anymore and running was the only thing I could do, after my parents...it was all I did," Firey finally said.

"The only thing in my life that I've ever been certain of, the only thing that didn't scare me, was you, I knew it was always going to be you and no matter what I tried I couldn't run from that,"

"So I did something that I never thought I would do and I faced it and it was the best thing I've ever done, telling you I loved you is one of the best choices I've ever made,"

"But the best choice was when I decided to ask you to marry me,"

...

The tears that Leafy had been trying so hard to hold back finally beat her and slowly began to fall as she stared at Firey while he smiled softly at her, his eyes tired and yet she had never seen so much love in them.

It reminded her of their wedding day.

"I want to stay with you Leafy, no matter what, I'm done with being scared and hurting people, I'm done with running from everything," Firey announced.

"I'll stay, I'll do whatever it takes, I swear, I'll wait because I know that we both need time to go through this but I'll stay,"

"But if me staying will hurt you and you ever want me to go, I will, I've made a promise to you that I won't break,"

A sob came from Leafy as the tears fell, searching for anything else in Firey's face but she came up blank.

She was always good at reading people and she could tell that each word he had just said was genuine and a weak smile spread across her face.

She wipes her eyes as a shakey laugh came from her and the smoke grew bigger.

"Dum-dum, if you think that after all this, I'd just send you away then you really must be stupid," she laughed though the tears still spilled.

"I've always been stupid, haven't I?" Firey nodded sheepishly.

"I think the stupidest thing is that you haven't even hugged me yet," Leafy said in a playful tone.

Firey's expression grew soft as tears pricked his own eyes, he walked over to Leafy, held her hand and hugged her tightly.

"Hm, how have you always been so warm?" Leafy murmured.

"I don't know but it works out for you doesn't it?" Firey smiled.

"I think a kiss would make me feel better though," Leafy shrugged.

Firey pulled back, looking at Leafy trying to see if she was joking but nothing indicated that.

"Really?" He asked.

"Really," she responded.

Slowly and gently, Firey leaned in and kissed her, his hand still holding onto her's as he did so.

The kiss was saccharine and soft, the feeling of Firey's warm lips against Leafy's cold ones made her feel like a weight was taken off her chest.

This what she wanted, this was what she had spent countless lonely nights wishing for.

And now she had it, right in front of her.

And she would be damned if anyone thought she would let it go.

"I want you to say it, I want to hear the promise," Leafy said, pulling away from the kiss.

"Say what?" Firey asked confusedly.

"Tell me that you'll stay, promise it," she insisted.

A small laugh escaped from him and he kissed her on the head.

"I, Firey Brennt, do promise to stay, to love and to care for you, to remain by your side, to have and to hold til death do us part," he whispered.

"You may now kiss the bride," Leafy joked.

And he did, he kissed her again, making her feel like they were just kids again, sharing their first kiss and making her feel butterflies in her stomach.

But when she looked into his eyes, she knew that the words he said were the truth and that promise he made would never be broken.

And with that simple kiss and those words that meant so much to both of them, things felt just a tiny but easier for her.

But they would be easier, now that she finally had the man she loved

back in her arms.

...

"Can I cuddle too mama?"

"Hell yeah!" Firey beamed as Leafy nodded.

Grove moved closer, clutching onto Leafy while Firey's arm held him close, the fluff from Firey's jacket hood tickling him and making him laugh his adorable little laugh.

After so long, after so many years of mourning and fear, they were together, warm and safe.

After so many years, they were finally a family.
= =

Look at the stars, look how they shine for you.
And everything you do.
Yeah they were all yellow
I came along
I wrote a song for you
And all the things you do
And it was called yellow.

Hope you enjoyed that chapter.

XOXO
LeafCake

Epilogue

From down the hall, a baby's crying could be heard.

A few minutes later, the sound of footfalls echoing against the walls could be heard.

Like most parents, the father stirred the moment he heard those tired little cries and after reassuring his wife that he would comfort their child, he exited their bedroom to check on the baby.

As he walked the short distance, he tried to figure out what kind of cry it was, wether it was a hungry cry, a scared cry or simply a cry for attention.

As usual, he couldn't tell. In comparison to his wife he wasn't very good at the whole "being a dad" thing and even after three months of having a baby, he was still unsure and he didn't like to admit it, but he was scared.

He pushed open the nursery door and greeted his crying child.

"Hey it's all right, your dad's here," he whispered.

He walked silently over to the crib and carefully picked up the baby and held her gently, one hand supporting the weight and the other patting her back while her tiny chin rested on his shoulder.

The volume of the crying lowered significantly but it didn't fully stop, after a while of walking around and attempting to comfort whatever was wrong, Firey concluded that it was not an attention seeking cry.

He shifted the baby so he was now able to see her face and he smiled lovingly at the little bundle in his arms.

"Are you scared? Did you have a nightmare?" He asked, still smiling.

In response, the baby continued to cry.

Firey focused on the cry for a moment, it wasn't quick and fretful and she didn't seem to be stressed, no sign of fear could be seen.

He couldn't smell anything either so there was no need for a change.

"Are you hungry, I think we've got a bottle here," He smiled.

He reached out and took a bottle from the table nearby and held it to the baby's lips and just like that, the crying stopped and Firey let out a contented sigh.

He watched as the baby fed, the soft, bright eyes focused on the bottle in the small hands.

Whenever Firey held his child, he always thought she was the most gorgeous thing in whole world.

Right after Leafy.

He loved her soft, deep red hair with the hints of yellow through it, he loved her sweet eyes that were an enchanting mix of red and green and her tiny nose that was just like her mother's.

Nothing made him happier than admiring his little girl and remembering when he was able to hold her for the first time.

He loved her from the start, he had cried when held her.

Two years have passed since all those horrible events happened.

Leafy recovered and was able to go back to her normal life, she was very happy about that.

She let Firey stay and there was a very long conversation about everything that happened and what led to all of it.

Leafy also had a chat with Grove about Firey and who he was but Grove, being the kind hearted child he is, took it all very well, admittedly a little bit confused but he adapted.

It took a little while but after a few months, Leafy finally heard Grove call Firey "papa"

She was a bit emotional that day.

Another conversation that occured what how they could deal with everything.

Both Firey and Leafy were dealing with mental impacts of the past.

Leafy struggled to sleep if Firey wasn't there beside her, she worried whenever he left the house alone and after what Two did, loud, sudden bangs terrified her.

She often woke up in the night after having vivid dreams of Two and the horribly dark and cold warehouse.

The scars on her arms and stomach were so hatefully clear, like a sick reminder of everything.

She realized that whenever she woke from a nightmare, her hand would clutch her stomach for some strange reason, as though she was trying to protect the scar.

Her nightmares left her feeling scared with tears in her eyes and an anxious feeling that thankfully ebbed away when Firey would realize what was going on and he'd hold her until he was certain she had fallen back asleep.

But sadly, Firey was no different when it came to his dreams or emotions.

He was still wracked with guilt and hatred at himself for leaving and the sight of blood in any way made him feel physically sick to the stomach.

He could no longer stand strong alcohol or the dark, these things among others, reminded him of a version of himself he couldn't stand to remember.

And just like Leafy, he had nightmares but his were much more frequent.

He remembered faces, screams and pain, that horrible smile that tortured him still followed into his sleep.

The warm sensation of blood on his hands remained in his mind, the feeling of pulling a trigger or watching life fade away would stay with him.

He would wake in a cold sweat, unable to breathe and terrified of what lurked in the shadows.

But Leafy was always there, she could always bring him back around and calm him with just the sound of her voice.

She would sit up and hold him, reminding him that she was right beside him and that he was in her arms, no one would be able to hurt anyone he cared about anymore.

He would gaze tiredly up at her and focus on her beautiful, loving face while her soft voice soothed him to sleep.

Neither had come out unscathed, both of them were scarred physically and mentally but with the support the had in each other they could help themselves find the good things and slowly disconnect from the memories they didn't want to be part of.

After much talk and consideration, they decided to move out of the city, away from the noise and the reminders of it all.

Firey received the money he earned from his years of service and Leafy had been promoted to a high position in her job and was now on the managers board alongside Gelatin.

Her position allowed her to work remotely and she was only required to be in the office once a week and the pay was excellent.

All of this combined with savings allowed them to buy a gorgeous house in the mountain scattered countryside, with fields and meadows as far as the eye could see.

Leafy had dreamed of a home like that for so long, it felt like a dream come true.

There was a bit of fixing up to do but Firey was actually surprisingly good at handiwork.

Almost as good as Leafy.

Once they settled in and got to know the area and the people, Firey began helping out in the local fields and farms, this made him very popular.

Grove was also fitting well to his new home, once again, he was popular in school and he loved running around the field or the forests and going for long hikes with his mama and papa.

He was scared at first but Leafy told him he would be okay and she made him a little good luck charm from flowers that grew in the meadow behind their house and he didn't feel quite as scared anymore.

He still loved his mama and her hugs, whenever they watch a movie he still snuggles up in her arms and goes into her bed on weekend mornings.

Overtime, he formed a relationship with Firey, often asking to go up on his shoulders or to play games together or help with dinner.

Leafy adored their father and son dynamic but her and Grove were always number one.

The family developed a good name for themselves and they fit in very well with everyone once the initial skepticism from the locals wore off.

Everything was working out, the had safety, they had a routine, Firey and Leafy both had the lives they wanted together.

But of course life is often full of surprises and this family was no exception.

When Leafy told Firey they were going to have a baby, it did catch him off guard but Leafy had never seen a happier smile in anyone's face than she had in that moment on Firey.

For a week straight after she told him, he didn't let her out of his arms and he always told her how much he loved her.

He did his best to help though the pregnancy but Leafy liked being independent and didn't let him do everything for her and there were many time that she had to gently tell him that she wasn't incapable of doing things.

She did her best to teach him everything she knew, showing him books, videos or telling him stories about her experiences with Grove but he was still very anxious about the new member of the family.

But it began to fade away gradually when he saw their little girl after so much stress and anticipation.

He kissed her gently on the head when she was finished the bottle and for a moment there was a lovely calm silence while he rocked her slowly.

Until she started crying again.

Firey didn't know what she wanted, he had tried to comfort her, he had fed her, she didn't need a change, he couldn't think of what else it could be.

He walked around with her in his arms while he wracked his brain for whatever was causing his baby to cry but eventually an idea came to him.

"Do you want your mama? Is she better at this?" He half joked.

At mention of her mother, the baby's volume softened and she snuggled against her father's warmth.

Firey took that as a yes and he carried her out of the nursery, toward their bedroom.

"I understand you completely, your mom's pretty amazing, isn't she?"

Firey gently opened the door, walked to the bed and sat down, quietly calling out his wife's name.

"Hey Leafs, I think she wants you this time,"

"Huh, doesn't she always?"

Leafy sat herself upright and took the baby from Firey's arms, lovingly cradling her and brushing her fluffy hair with her fingers.

"She's just like you really, she can make such an uproar about things but all she needs to calm down is a little love from me," she smiled.

"What can I say? You're a naturally comforting person," Firey shrugged.

"That's from years of practice with your tantrums when we were younger," Leafy teased.

"Say what you want but she's falling asleep thanks to you" Firey pointed out.

The little girl's eyes were almost fully closed but still open as though she were fighting sleep.

"It's okay baby, mama and papa are here, you can go to sleep, you're all nice and cozy and we'll keep you all snug and safe," Leafy said in a soothing tone.

She placed her baby down onto the bed and Leafy lay on her side while she held her hand, Firey doing the same on the other side and they both stared in admiration at the sleeping baby between them.

After a while, Firey spoke.

"She's so small, isn't she?"

"Good observation," Leafy yawned

"No, I mean like, I never realized how delicate babies were until she came along, it's...a bit scary if I'm being honest," Firey admitted.

"What are you getting at?" Leafy questioned.

"Well, I've never been a very delicate person, I've always broken

things or damaged them and I just worry everytime I hold her that I'll do something wrong or that I'm doing something wrong to begin with," he sighed.

"I want to be a good dad, I want to do things right but I know nothing about being a dad and I sometimes watch the way you are with her and Grove and it's just so amazing how naturally it comes to you, you know?"

Leafy smiled softly at her worried husband, the moonlight shining down on her, giving her skin an almost shimmering look to it.

"It didn't come naturally at all, when Grove was born I had no idea what I was doing, I was worried just like you are but I used every day as a chance to learn something and overtime, I got to know Grove and I did my best, that's all," she explained.

"You did a really good job with him, it's so obvious that being a mom is something you're suited for, you're such a caring and loving person, you're perfect Leafs, that's our difference,"Firey sighed.

Leafy's face changed to a more serious one, her eyes fixed on Firey.

"Now, you know that's not true," she snapped.

"Leafy, since we were six years old you've been the only thing in the world I actually cared about until I found out about Grove and this thing decided to exist," Firey replied, slightly frustrated, gesturing to the now fully sleeping baby.

"That right there proves that your caring, even to a small degree," Leafy smiled again.

"Huh, how?" Firey questioned.

"You just admitted to caring about me and about our kids and the fact that you care about doing a good job at being their dad shows that you really are a caring person," Leafy grinned.

Firey remained still and motionless, he glanced at the baby beside him.

"Firey, believe me when I say that you're doing fine, I know how hard you're trying and that's more than enough, you get better every day," he heard Leafy say.

"Being a parent isn't easy but you're working so hard and seeing you holding her and singing to her is one of the best things I've seen in my life and I never thought I'd get to see that," Leafy continued.

"I never thought I'd get to hear Grove call you dad let alone get to see you looking after our second child, it means so much to me and you have no idea how happy it makes me,"

Firey kept his eyes on the baby while he listened to Leafy, gently holding her hand as he let Leafy's words settle.

"I don't want to hear you saying that you aren't cut out to be a father because it's just not true, you're nervous but you can't let that cloud your mind, you've said you want to be a good dad and I know you won't stop until you think you are and that's more important than you'd imagine,"

"You're doing so well and I know you don't agree but Grove adores you and you mean the absolute world to me..."

"And I'm certain this little sweetheart loves her papa to the moon and back," Leafy laughed softly.

Firey's expression softened as his gazed moved from his child to his wife.

The woman who never stopped loving him.

The woman who was stronger than him in so many ways.

The woman who was the most beautiful thing he knew and the reason he stayed alive.

The mother of his children and the only person he has ever loved in such a fierce way.

Gently, he reached out and placed his hand against Leafy's cheek and kissed her so softly yet so full of love.

When they pulled away, they stared at each other, their noses inches apart.

Firey breathed in her smell, Leafy always used a certain perfume and to him it was a sign of comfort and love.

"I love you," he whispered with a smile and in response, Leafy kissed his nose.

Words could never describe the amount of love these two held, nothing could measure how much they cared about the other.

...

The moment was interupted by a tiny sneeze followed by a sniffle from the baby between them and Firey couldn't help but laugh as his daughter rubbed her face with her little hands that were covered by mittens.

Leafy watched as Firey babbled to the baby, giving her soft kisses on her chubby cheeks and keeping her close so she didn't get cold.

It was an absolutely perfect sight to her, a blessing right in front of her.

Even just the smallest act of Firey carrying the baby would have her feeling greatful for the opportunity of getting to see it.

After so much darkness, she finally had a ray of light and had used it to chase all of her fears away.

Despite everything, Firey was here, beside her playing with the cutest baby girl she had ever seen.

She could move on, she had a new life now but she wouldn't really be able to forget the loneliness she had felt for so long.

And she definitely would never forget her first bit of hope when she was at her worst.

The reason she kept going for so long.

"I'm gonna go check on Grove," she said as she pushed herself out of bed.

"We'll be here," Firey smiled.

Leafy walked down the hallway and opened Grove's door and walked over to his bed.

Grove was sound asleep, his hair ruffled and fluffy like it usually was and a smile indicated he was having a nice dream.

She crouched down and rested her arms and head on the blanket and she gently stroked his hair and quietly sang a lullaby she would sing to him when he was just a baby.

"Hello mama," he mumbled tiredly after she finished the song.

"I'm sorry Grovey, did I wake you?" She asked.

"It's okay mama, I like when you sing," he responded.

"You can go back to sleep baby, I'm just making sure you're alright," she smiled.

Grove reached out and took her hand and held it as he fell asleep again.

"Thank you mama," he murmured before he drifted off . "Love you,"

"I love you too Grovey," she said, kissing him on the head.

Grove was so special to her, he meant so much and nothing would ever change that.

If it weren't for him, she would have given up long ago and she wouldn't have the life she did now.

Grove was her reason, Grove helped her feel better when she never dared to image she could.

His existence was a surprise to her but it was the best she ever had.

And now everything was okay, she was safe, Grove was safe and her

family was safe.

She felt better with each passing day, each bad and blurry memory becoming fainter with each second she spent with the people she loved most.

When Firey had "died" she lost a part of herself but overtime she was able to figure things out and put it all back together, nothing was gone.

She had what she wanted, she was content.

She was loved and she was safe with the man she loved.

In her eyes, everything was perfect.

But after everything, it was what she deserves.

= =

Thank you for reading Gone Without You, it's been so much fun writing this book.

I hope you enjoyed it.
XOXO
LeafCake

Thank Yous

First off, I want to thank anyone who has read this book, I hope you enjoyed it.

Next, I want to think literally anyone who has ever voted or commented, it may seem like something small but they really mean a lot to authors and I love seeing what people have to say, it always motivates me and I always find them so funny!

I'm going to thank TippyToas for all the fanart and letting me rant to them on discord and giving me some really cute ideas and just being such a fun person to talk to, Tippy really motivated me to keep writing the book, their art is so cute and so amazing, I love it so much I just wanna flzljgsgilgstluxyofiyfylid ya know? My absolute fave person to talk to live laugh love.

Thank you to Asdfilmo for being similar but more so on the rant side. Seriously, like I would message them at all hours and they would still respond and even when I bugged them to tell me their Fireafy ideas they still let me literally spoil all of my books, I love talking to them and I want them to keep updating their books, love love love.

Next thank you is for Katt4catt who gave me such good ideas for all of my books, I've literally written all of my plots in our DMs and they always find a way to write funny dialog and they're so supportive of my art and writing, they give me critism and it's really helpful because I'm always looking to improve so thank you so much!
(They are also always the first vote on my books, always)

I'm also gonna thank AnotherGlobeEnjoyer because their comments are always just silly and I like seeing them.

Thank you to all my regular readers, just because your name isn't here doesn't mean I don't know you! I love all of you and you give me the motivation to keep writing these books and I hope I can continue

to give you some much needed, well-written Fireafy books when the fandom starves you.

Once more, thank you all so much and I hope you liked Gone Without You.

Please leave any thoughts or feelings you have in the comments, I love reading them.

XOXO
LeafCake

An Idea.

So basically, I really love this book and I have so many ideas for it and I want to share them with you guys.

I'm not going to write a sequel because I want everyone to be happy and living a good life so what I am going to do is write a oneshot book with little stories and stuff set in the world.

There won't be any order to it but it'll just make the book feel a little more real and I think it'll be really great to try it out.

The stories will be like what Leafy and Groves lives were like before Firey came back, how Firey deals with being a dad and things like that.

There will be angst don't worry but my main focus is just cute Fireafy.

Tell me what you think of this idea.

XOXO
LeafCake

Scrapped Ideas.

Its been a year since I wrote this book since I actually had the first six chapters written by the end of January but I didn't publish it until about halfway through the year and I honestly don't know why.

I had been thinking about the book for a while and I had some ideas that didn't make it in or that I just did differently.

1.Grove was going to be younger:

I was gonna have him be like two or possibly younger but as I figured out what tone I wanted the book to have, I realised that the longer Firey was gone for the more impact it would have when he returned and it means that Grove and Leafy actually have a bond with Grove having his own childish opinions on everything going on around him.

2.Leafy was going to be A LOT meaner to Firey after his return.

Like just out right mean and refusing to let Grove anywhere near him, she was going to be really rude and bitchy due to being so hurt and the first kiss in the book would have had a lot more tears and angst.

But then I was like, "I want them to have a cute, happy backstory to make the loss hurt more" and it doesn't match Leafy's character for her to be mean to someone she's being yearning for.

3. Two was going to kidnap Grove and Leafy would be the one to kill him.

This idea just didn't work, Leafy has no experience killing anyone and it didn't make sense, I was gonna have her kinda snap and just kill Two but it was overly complicated and there was nothing realistic about it.

4. I came insanely close to actually killing Leafy

I had to be convinced by my friend to let her live because not many fanfics actually kill beloved characters and it would have been more angsty and less common but I absolutely love Leafy so killing her would physically hurt me.

5. Leafy's parents were going to have a bigger role until I decided not to, I couldn't figure out their characters and other things so I decided to keep them as distant background characters.

6. I wanted to further explore Coiny's relationship and feelings toward Leafy, unrequited love and wanting, how they met and how Leafy feels about him but it didn't help the story progress and I didn't want it to be some stupid love triangle so I didn't use this idea.

(I also didn't want too many filler chapters)

7. Four was actually going to meet Leafy, I had a few different ideas for this, possibly after the big fight between Firey and Leafy after Firey runs away or when Leafy is recovering in hospital and Four would explain everything to Leafy.

Very similar to the Two situation, it didn't feel realistic and it makes more sense for Four to interact with Leafy since they're still an agent by the end of it all.

8. I was going to explore what Two was doing and why exactly there was a big case going on at all but personally it feels better to have it explained a little bit and then allow the reader to imagine what they think in their head, there's literally no wrong answer at all, go wild.

9. Blocky was an agent at the start but I retconned the idea since it didn't make sense for Blocky to still be around while Firey wasn't.

Originally, after the fight Blocky would tell Leafy Firey's plan and she would go with Blocky to stop it but then be ambushed by Two and held hostage with a similar ending to the book.

10. More characters from the show were gonna play a role.

Two originally had a whole group with him during the final conflict

and we would have a chapter where Firey has to work his way through an old building, killing a couple guards and trying to find where Leafy was.

I never wanted to make Firey look like a badass, I didn't want that for anyone, I wanted to show that despite having titles and such, people are still human and will make stupid mistakes so that's why this idea wasn't used.

11. I was going to go deeper into Leafy's time alone raising Grove, how she dealt with the sadness and how she kept going, honestly kinda wish I had used this one but I was worried about filler chapters that didn't do anything so I sadly didn't use this idea.

That's a few of the ideas anyway, what do you all think?

What ideas should I have used or does my reasoning make sense?

Is there anything you would add or remove the finished story?

Honestly, I'm proud of Gone Without You and I think the way it went was pretty good but obviously things can always be improved.

I hope you all liked the book as much as I did.

XOXO
LeafCake

New Chapters?

I had a few ideas for chapters that I want to put into the story, early chapters that I just feel would make the story way better and would help the flow.

Basically I wanna write some chapters about when Firey first comes back and his relationship with Grove because I really wish I had dragged that out a bit more because it feels like Grove warmed up to him way to quickly.

One of the chapters has sick Grove in it and it's actually so cute.

Let me know if you guys would be alright if I uploaded these because I swear it's worth it and they'll mainly be filler chapters so you wouldn't really need to read any other chapters beforehand.